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The BYSTANDER

Christmas Number 1937

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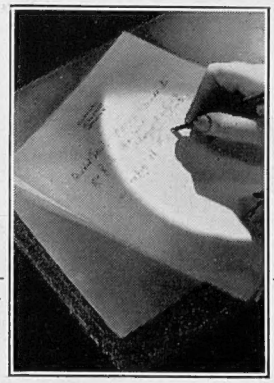

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ILLUSTRATED HOUSE, 32-34, St. Bride St., London, E.C.4.

No. 1770a. Vol. CXXXVI.

The Bystander

Christmas Number, 1937

The Gyppos

From the painting by Dame Laura Knight, R.A., in this year's Royal Academy Exhibition

Pantomime Dress-Parade: by Doris Zinkeisen

Mrs. Stitch Fails for the First Time

A Topical Satire in the Author's Best Manner

By Evelyn Waugh

Illustrations by Severin

I.

WHILE still a young man, John Courteney Boot had, as his publishers proclaimed, "achieved an assured and enviable position in contemporary letters." His novels sold fifteen thousand copies in their first year and were read by the people whose opinion John Boot respected. Between novels he kept his name sweet in intellectual circles with unprofitable but modish excursions into biography and travel. His signed first editions sometimes changed hands at a shilling or two above their original price. He had published eight books—beginning with a life of Rimbaud, written when he was eighteen, and concluding, at the moment, with *Waste of Time*, a studiously modest description of some harrowing months among the Patagonian Indians—of which most people who lunched with Lady Metroland could remember the names of three or four. He had countless friends among the powerful and the charming, of whom the most valued was the lovely Mrs. Algernon Stitch. Like all in her circle John Boot habitually brought his difficulties to her for solution. It was with this purpose, on a biting cold, mid-June morning that he crossed the Park and called at her house (a superb creation by Nicholas Hawksmoor, modestly concealed in a cul-de-sac near Saint James's Palace).

Algernon Stitch was standing in the hall; his bowler hat was on his head; his right hand, grasping a crimson, royally emblazoned despatch case, emerged from the left sleeve of his overcoat; his other hand burrowed petulantly in the breast pocket. An umbrella under his left arm further inconvenienced him. He spoke indistinctly, for he was holding a folded copy of the morning paper between his teeth.

"Can't get it on," he seemed to say.

The man who had opened the door came to his assistance, removed the umbrella and despatch case and laid them on the marble table; removed the coat and held it behind his master. John took *The Times*.

"Thanks. Thanks very much. Much obliged. Come to see Julia, eh?"

From high overhead, down the majestic curves of the great staircase, came a small but preternaturally resonant voice.

"Try not to be late for dinner, Algy, the King and Queen are coming."

"She's upstairs," said Stitch. He had his coat on now and looked fully an English Cabinet Minister; long and thin, with a long, thin nose, and long, thin moustaches; the ideal model for continental caricaturists. "You'll find her in bed," he said.

"Your speech reads very well this morning." John was always polite to Stitch; everybody was; Labour Members loved him.

"Speech? Mine? Ah. Reads well, eh? Sounded terrible to me. Thanks all the same. Thanks very much. Much obliged."

So Stitch went out to the Ministry of Imperial Defence and John went up to see Julia.

As her husband had said, she was still in bed although it was past eleven o'clock. Her normally mobile face was rigid and menacing as an Aztec mask, encased in clay. But she was not resting. Her secretary, Miss Holloway, sat at her side with account books, bills and correspondence. With one hand Mrs. Stitch was signing cheques; with the other she held the telephone to which, at the moment, she was dictating details of the costumes for a charity ballet. An elegant young man at the top of a step-ladder was painting ruined castles on the ceiling. Josephine, the eight-year-old Stitch prodigy, sat on the foot of the bed construing her day's passage of Virgil. Her maid, Brittling, was reading the clues of the morning c r o s s - w o r d. Mrs. Stitch had been hard at it since half-past seven.

Algernon Stitch was standing in the hall

Josephine rose from her lesson to kick John as he entered. "*Boot*," she said savagely, "*Boot*" catching him first on one knee cap, then on the other. It was a joke of long standing.

Mrs. Stitch turned her face of clay, in which only the eyes gave a suggestion of welcome, towards her visitor.

"Come in," she said, "I'm just going out. Why twenty pounds to Mrs. Beaver?"

"That was for Lady Jean's wedding present," said Miss Holloway.

"I must have been insane. . . . About the lion's head for the centurion's breastplate; there's a beautiful one over the gate of a house near Salisbury, called Twisbury Manor; copy that as near as you can; ring up *Country Life* and ask for 'back numbers'; there was a photograph of it about two years ago. . . . You're putting too much ivy on the turret, Arthur; the owl won't show up unless you have him on the bare stone, and I'm particularly attached to the owl. . . . *Mŭněră*, darling, like tumtiddy; always a short "a" in neuter plurals. . . . It sounds like an anagram; see if 'Terracotta' fits. . . . I'm *delighted* to see you, John. Where have you been? You can come and buy carpets with me; I've found a new shop in Bethnal Green, kept by a very interesting Jew who speaks no English; the most extraordinary things keep happening to his sister. . . . Why should I go to Viola Chasm's Distressed Area; did she come to my Model Madhouse?"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Stitch."

"Then I suppose it means two guineas. . . . I absolutely loved *Waste of Time*. We read it aloud at Blakewell. . . . The headless abbot is grand."

"Headless abbot?"

"Not in Wasters. On Arthur's ceiling. I put it in the Prime Minister's bedroom."

"Did he read it?"

"Well, I don't think he *reads* much."

"Terracotta is too long, madam, and there is no 'r.'"

"Try hottentot. It's that kind of word. I can never do anagrams unless I can see them. . . . No *Twisbury*, you must have heard of it."

"Floribus Austrum," Josephine chanted, "perditus et liquidis immisi fontibus apros; having been lost with flowers in the South and sent into the liquid fountains; apros is wild boars, but I couldn't quite make sense of that bit."

"We'll do it to-morrow. I've got to go out now. . . . Is 'hottentot' any use?"

"No 'h,' madam," said Brittling, with ineffable gloom.

"Oh, dear. I must look at it in my bath. I shall only be ten minutes. Stay and talk to Josephine."

She was out of bed and out of the room. Brittling followed. Miss Holloway collected the cheques and papers. The young man on the ladder dabbed away industriously. Josephine rolled to the head of the bed and stared up at him.

"It's very banal, isn't it, Boot?"

"I like it very much."

"Do you? I think all Arthur's work is banal. I read your book *Waste of Time*."

"Ah." John did not invite criticism.

"I thought it very banal."

"You seem to find everything banal."

"It is a new word whose correct use I have only lately learnt," said Josephine with dignity. "I find it applies to nearly everything: Virgil and Miss Brittling and my gymnasium."

"How is the gymnasium going?"

"I am by far the best of my class, although there are several girls older than me and two middle-class boys."

WHEN Mrs. Stitch said ten minutes, she meant ten minutes. Sharp on time she was back, dressed for the street; her lovely face scraped clean of clay was now alive with interest.

"Sweet Josephine, has Mr. Boot been boring you?"

"It was all right, really. I did most of the talking."

"Show him your imitation of the Prime Minister."

"No."

"Sing him your Neapolitan song."

"No."

"Stand on your head. Just once for Mr. Boot."

"No."

"Oh, dear. Well, we must go at once if we are to get to Bethnal Green and back before luncheon. The traffic's terrible."

Algernon Stitch went to his office in a sombre and rather antiquated Daimler; Julia always drove herself, in the latest model of mass-produced baby car; brand-new twice a year, painted an invariable brilliant black, tiny and glossy as a midget's funeral hearse. She mounted the kerb and bowled rapidly along the pavement to the corner of St. James's, where a policeman took her number and ordered her into the road.

"Third time this week," said Mrs. Stitch. "I wish they wouldn't. It's such a nuisance for Algy."

Once embedded in the traffic block, she stopped the engine and turned her attention to the cross-word.

"It's 'detonate,'" she said, filling it in.

East wind swept the street carrying with it the exhaust gas of a hundred motors and coarse particles of Regency stucco from a once decent Nash façade that was being demolished across the way. John shivered and rubbed some grit further into his eye. Eight minutes close application was enough to finish the puzzle. Mrs. Stitch folded the paper and tossed it over her shoulder into the back seat; looked about her resentfully at the stationary traffic.

"This is too much," she said; started the engine, turned sharp again on to the kerb and proceeded to Piccadilly, driving before her at a brisk pace, until he took refuge on the step of Brooks's, a portly, bald young man; when he reached safety, he turned to remonstrate, recognised Mrs. Stitch, and bowed profoundly to the tiny, black back as it shot the corner of

As her husband had said, she was still in bed, although it was past eleven o'clock

Arlington Street. "One of the things I like about these absurd cars," she said, "is that you can do things with them that you couldn't do in a real one."

From Hyde Park Corner to Piccadilly Circus the line of traffic was continuous and motionless, still as a photograph, unbroken and undisturbed save at a few strategic corners where barricaded navvies, like desperate outposts of some proletarian defence, were rending the road with mechanical drills, mining for the wires and tubes that controlled the life of the city.

"I want to get away from London," said John Boot.

"So it's come to that? All on account of your American girl?"

"Well, mostly."

"I warned you, before you began. Is she being frightful?"

She looked about her resentfully at the stationary traffic

"My lips are sealed. But I've got to get far away or else go crazy."

"To my certain knowledge she's driven three men into the bin. Where are you going?"

"That's just what I wanted to talk about."

The line of cars jerked forwards for ten yards and again came to rest. The lunch-time edition of the evening papers was already on the streets; placards announcing—

CHINA CRISIS
and
STRONG LEAGUE NOTE

were fluttering in the East wind.

"China seems to be the place. I was wondering if Algy would send me there as a spy."

"Not a chance."

"No?"

"Foregonners. Algy's been sacking ten spies a day for weeks. It's a grossly overcrowded profession. Why don't you go as a war correspondent?"

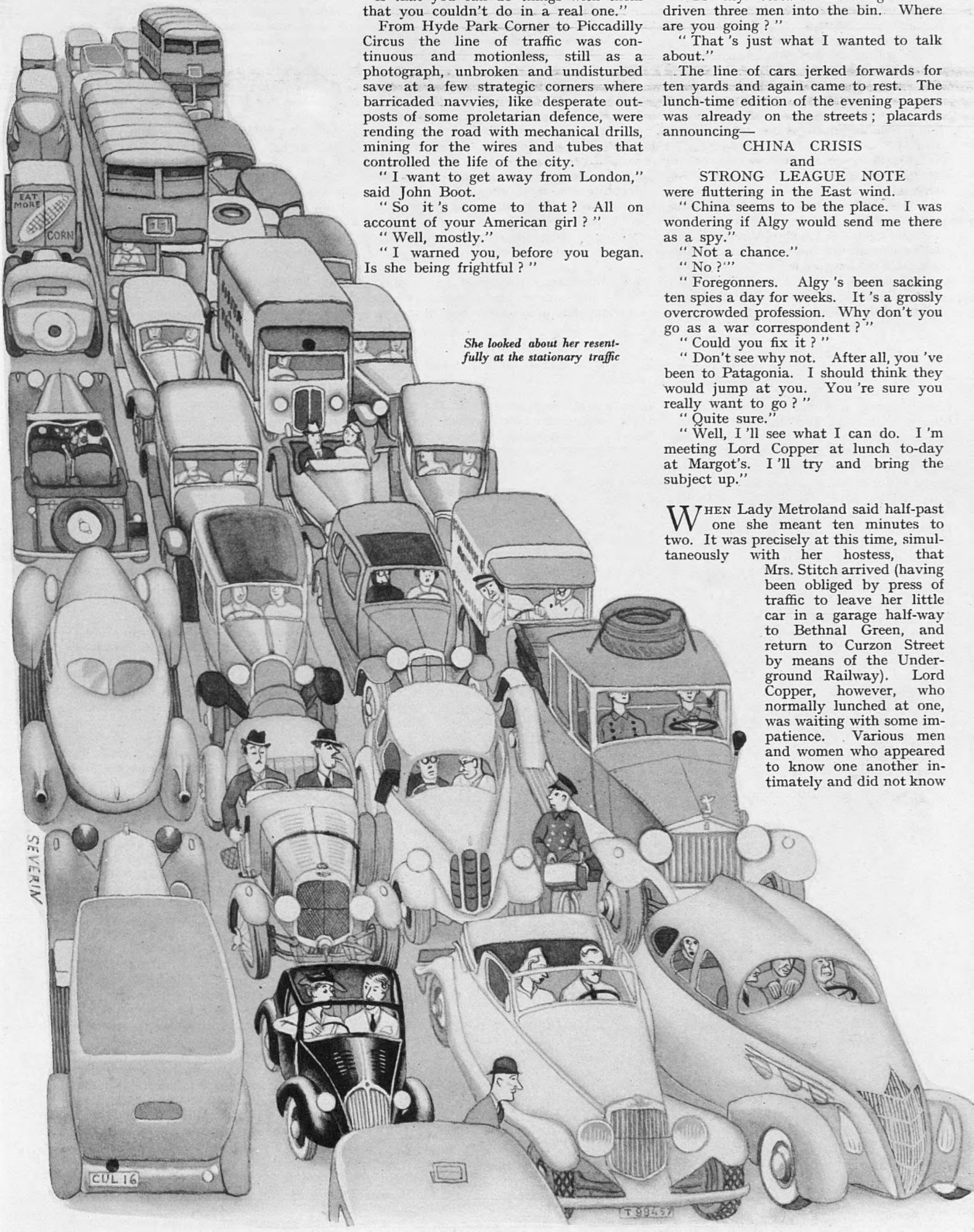
"Could you fix it?"

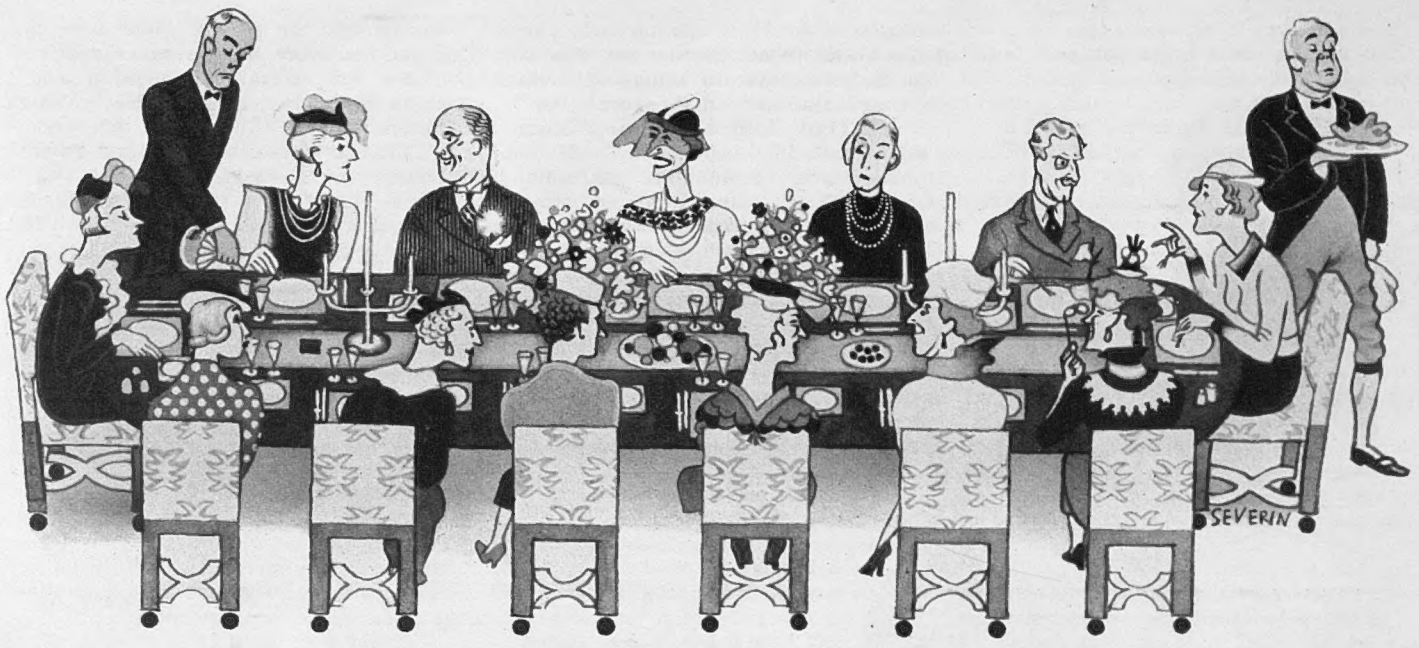
"Don't see why not. After all, you've been to Patagonia. I should think they would jump at you. You're sure you really want to go?"

"Quite sure."

"Well, I'll see what I can do. I'm meeting Lord Copper at lunch to-day at Margot's. I'll try and bring the subject up."

WHEN Lady Metroland said half-past one she meant ten minutes to two. It was precisely at this time, simultaneously with her hostess, that Mrs. Stitch arrived (having been obliged by press of traffic to leave her little car in a garage half-way to Bethnal Green, and return to Curzon Street by means of the Underground Railway). Lord Copper, however, who normally lunched at one, was waiting with some impatience. Various men and women who appeared to know one another intimately and did not know



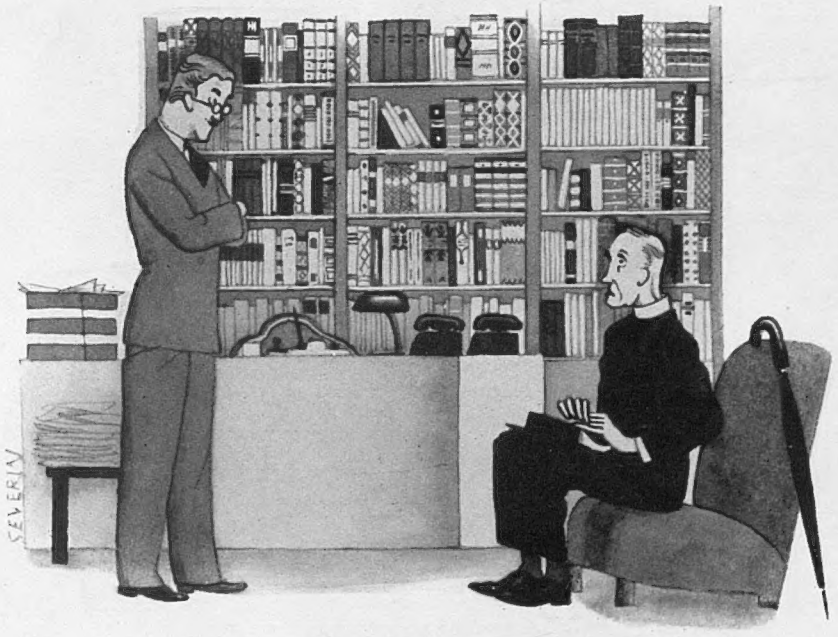


Lord Copper found himself riddled through and through, mesmerised, inebriated

Lord Copper, had been admitted from time to time and had disregarded him. His subordinates at the Megalopolitan Newspaper Corporation would have been at difficulties to recognise the uneasy figure which stood up each time the door was opened and sat down again unnoticed. It was a thoughtless benefaction to one of Lady Metroland's charities that had exposed him, in the middle of a busy day, to this harrowing experience; he would readily, now, have doubled the sum to purchase his release. Thus when Mrs. Stitch directed upon him some of her piercing shafts of charm she found him first numb, then dazzled, then extravagantly receptive.

From the moment of her entrance the luncheon-party was transformed for Lord Copper; as one of his editors would have said, he had gotten a new angle on it. He knew of Mrs. Stitch; from time to time he had seen her in the distance; now for the first time he found himself riddled through and through, mesmerised, inebriated. Those at the table, witnessing the familiar process, began to conjecture, in tones which Lord Copper was too much entranced to overhear, what Julia could possibly want of him. "It's her model madhouse," said some; "she wants the caricaturists to lay off Algy," said others; "Been losing money," thought the second footman (at Lady Metroland's order he was on diet and lunch-time always found him in a cynical mood); "a job for someone or other," came nearest the truth, but no one thought of John Courteney Boot until Mrs. Stitch brought him into the conversation. Then they all played up loyally.

"You know," she said, after coaxing Lord Copper into an uncompromising denunciation of the Prime Minister's public and private honesty, "I expect he's all you say, but he's a man of far more taste than you'd suppose. He always sleeps with a Boot by his bed."



In his ghastly library, he outlined the situation in the Far East

"A boot?" asked Lord Copper, trustful, but a little bewildered.

"One of John Boot's books."

The luncheon-party had got their cue.

"Dear John Boot," said Lady Metroland, "*so* clever and amusing. I wish I could get him to come and see me more often."

"Such a divine style," said Lady Cockpurse.

The table buzzed with praise of John Boot. It was a new name to Lord Copper. He resolved to question his literary secretary on the subject. He had become Boot-conscious.

Mrs. Stitch changed her ground and began to ask him in the most flattering way about the chances of peace in China. Lord Copper gave it as his opinion that the fighting was assuming a new and decisive phase. Mrs. Stitch remarked how few of the famous war correspondents still survived.

"Isn't there one called Sir Something Hitchcock?" asked Lady Cockpurse. (This was a false step since the knight in question had lately left Lord Copper's service, after an acrimonious dispute about the date of the battle of Hastings, and had transferred to the Duomark camp.)

"Will you be sending any more correspondents to China?" asked Mrs. Stitch.

"I am in consultation with my editors on the subject. We think it a very promising little war and propose to give it fullest publicity. The workings of a great newspaper," said Lord Copper, feeling at last thoroughly Rotarian, "are of a complexity which the public seldom appreciates. The citizen little realises the vast machinery put into motion for him in exchange for his morning penny." ("Oh, God," said Lady Metroland, faintly but audibly.) "We have our naval, military and air experts, our squad of photographers, our colour reporters, covering the war from every angle and on every front."

"Yes," said Mrs. Stitch. "Yes, yes. I suppose you will. . . . If I were you I should send someone like Boot. I don't suppose you could persuade *him* to go, but someone like him."

"It has been my experience, dear Mrs. Stitch, that the Megalopolitan can command the talent of the world. Only last week the Poet Laureate wrote us an ode to the seasonal fluctuation of our net sales. We splashed it on the middle page. He admitted it was the most poetic and highly-paid work he had ever done."

"Well, of course, if you *could* get him, Boot is your man. He 's a brilliant writer, he 's travelled everywhere and knows the whole Chinese situation inside out."

"Boot would be divine," said Lady Cockpurse loyally.

Half an hour later Mrs. Stitch rang up to say "O.K., John. I think it 's fixed. Don't take a penny less than fifty pounds a week."

II.

THAT evening, Mr. Salter, foreign editor of *The Voice*, was summoned to dinner at his chief's country house at East Finchley. It was a highly unwelcome invitation; Mr. Salter normally worked at the office until nine o'clock. That evening he had planned a holiday at the opera; he and his wife had been looking forward to it with keen enjoyment for some weeks. As he drove out to Lord Copper's frightful mansion he thought sadly of those carefree days when he had edited the Woman's Page, or, better still, when he had chosen the jokes for one of Lord Copper's comic weeklies. It was the policy of the Megalopolitan to keep staff alert by constant changes of occupation. Mr. Salter's ultimate ambition was to take charge of the Competitions. Meanwhile he was Foreign Editor and found it a dog's life.

The two men dined alone. They ate parsley soup, whiting, roast veal, cabinet pudding; they drank whiskey and soda. Lord Copper explained Nazism, Fascism and Communism; later, in his ghastly library, he outlined the situation in the Far East. "*The Voice* stands for strong, mutually antagonistic governments everywhere," he said. "Self-sufficiency at home, self-assertion abroad."

Mr. Salter's side of the conversation was limited to expressions of assent. When Lord Copper was right he said, "Definitely, Lord Copper"; when he was wrong, "Up to a point."

"Let me see, what 's the name of the place I mean? Capital of Yugoslavia. Prague, isn't it?"

"Up to a point, Lord Copper."

"And Malta belongs to us, doesn't it?"

"Definitely, Lord Copper."

After a time: "Then there 's this war in China. Some of the papers are going cold on it. I propose to feature it. I don't think we are getting the service I expect from the staff reporters. We must send someone with a name."

"Well, Lord Copper, you see, since we lost Hitchcock——"

"Yes, yes. He was our only man with a European reputation. *I know.* Duomark has sent him. *I know.* But he was wrong about the battle of Hastings. It *was* 1066. I looked it up. I won't employ a man who isn't big enough to admit when he 's wrong."

"We might share one of the Americans?"

"No; I tell you who I want. Boot."

"Boot?"

"Yes, Boot. He 's a young man whose work I 'm very much interested in. He has the most remarkable style and he 's been in Patagonia and the Prime Minister keeps his books by his bed. Do *you* read him?"

"Up to a point, Lord Copper."

"Well, get on to him to-morrow. Have him up to see you. Be cordial. Take him out to dinner. Get him at any price. Well, at any reasonable price," he added—for there had lately been a painful occurrence when instructions of this kind, given in an expansive mood, had been too literally observed, and a trick cyclist, who had momentarily attracted Lord Copper's attention, had been engaged to edit the Sports Page on a five-years' contract at five thousand a year.

MR. SALTER went to work at mid-day. He found the Managing Editor cast in gloom.

"It 's a terrible paper this morning," he said. "We paid Professor Jellaby thirty guineas for the feature article and there 's not a word in it one can understand. Beaten by *The Excess* in every edition on the Zoo Mercy Slaying story. And *look at the Sports Page.*"

Together, in shame, the two men read the trick cyclist's Sports Page.

"Who 's Boot?" asked Mr. Salter at last.

"I know the name," said the Managing Editor.

"The chief wants to send him to China. He 's the Prime Minister's favourite writer."

(Continued on page ii)

An unfamiliar figure appeared in the vestibule of "The Voice" office

Howard Coster, F.R.S.A.

Carol with Variations

V. Jiru

Ladies of the Chorus

H. Gernsheim

WINTER TREE

The Affair at Sedon Hall

Was It Supernatural—Or a Clever Trick?

By Neil Bell

Illustrations by J. Morton Sale

EXAGGERATION, a harmless and pleasant decoration in most tales, is inexcusable in stories of the supernatural. I will not, therefore, say, with the genial largesse of Munchausen, that I have seen thousands of séances, but will content myself with the very moderate estimate of a hundred. I have, then, been present at a hundred séances. And only once has anything happened. But perhaps that is hardly a fair way to put it, for at many of them—most of them, in fact—a great deal happened, if I am to believe the senses of others rather than my own. These others, more subtly sensitive perhaps than I, saw, smelt, heard and felt amazing things, incredible things, and if no one's sense of taste was tickled it is no doubt because, for some or no reason, that is the one gateway of knowledge which spirits appear to avoid. Impartiality is no virtue of mine, and it is best that I admit forthright that I am not a sceptic in these matters. I go much further: I deny the possibility of supernatural interference with our human ways. And yet on one occasion something indubitably happened. It happened beyond all argument. I was there and I know. The evidence of the occurrence was strong enough to resist all the probings and searchings of a court of justice. Have I an explanation? Have I even a plausible hypothesis to account for that evening's extraordinary chain of events? Well, let us have the story first and leave theorising till afterwards.

I have known Sir Henry Sedon for over thirty years. I was at school with him at Sherbridge. We were in the Army together. I once lay in the next bed to him for three weeks in the dysentery ward of a stifling hospital in Salonika. I have shot and golfed with him and, most revealing intimacy of all, I have fished with him—scores of salmon and trout streams of this pleasant land have watched us unconsciously stripping ourselves to the bare bones before the critical eyes of each other.

That was all before his marriage sixteen years ago, just after he had, by an unusual train of tragedies, unexpectedly succeeded to the Sedon title and estates: he is the fourteenth baronet. But, indeed, the odd and the unusual seemed to be magnetically attracted to Henry Sedon. A dozen instances drift into my mind, but this is not the place to tell them. That tragic chain was the death of his great-uncle, Sir Byers Sedon in a hunting fall; of his uncle, Sir Charles, three months later, in a shooting accident; and within a month, the drowning in the Thames on a quiet, soft, summer night of his cousin, Sir Godfrey—you may perhaps remember the incident? It was a lark and a bet after dinner; a swim of a mere hundred yards or so from one houseboat to another; a lot of chaff and laughter; a wave of the hand and a plunge fully dressed—and that was all. Absolutely all, indeed, for they never even recovered the body. And so Henry Sedon, a trifle war-worn and soiled, disillusioned, and doing something not too remunerative in cars, found himself, as the result of a mildly tipsy frolic, possessed of a title, an estate in Devonshire, a lot of property in Great Portland Street (so oddly near to his former employers, International Motors, Ltd.), and an income fatly waddling towards six figures.

Within a year he was married. That was inevitable: he was a perfect match and there were dozens of gifted

Driving to Sedon Hall, they crashed into it in the darkness

mammas eager to strike him to provide warmth and light for a fair daughter: the simplicity of the description is merely to speak in parable. But here luck was with him, for with the wife chosen for him (by herself and her mother), he fell passionately in love during the honeymoon (and Sybil Bastable was dainty and charming and wise enough to have made that emotional adventure bewilderingly enchanting to far more experienced lovers than Henry), and a year later was still blissfully a captive to *les moments exquis* (as the French delightfully put it), and was, to boot, the father of a fine boy, Robert.

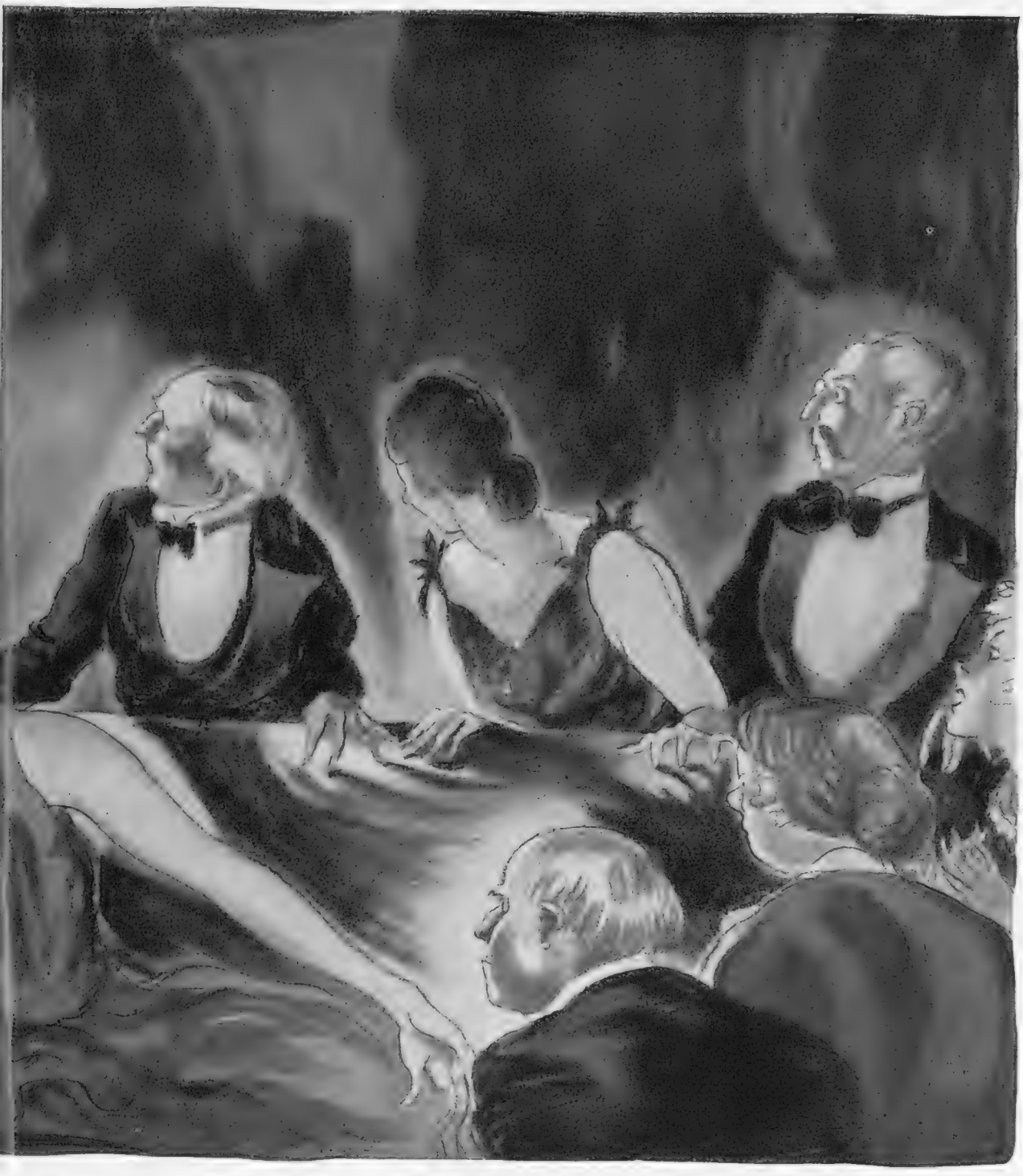
Thereafter Sir Henry and I rarely met except upon a few social occasions among a crowd of others. Certainly we never holidayed together. A wife cuts across a man's friendships, and children somehow seem to complete the severance. Further, I was a bachelor, and my way of life was no longer his. There was little danger, if I may put it so, of my changing a bachelor's life for a domestic one, for I was not a good enough match to be led willy-nilly into matrimony, and the one or two girls who might have tempted me into marriage preferred someone else.

Now for a brief digression which you will not cavil at if you love speculating, as I do, upon the odd hazards, or it may be predestinations, of cause and effect. It is no way to tell a story, but it is, I hope, a not-unpardonable lapse. It means a jump backwards of fifty-five years in time—a full two years, in fact, before Henry Sedon was born or dreamed of. There was (and still is) a pretty little Devon village named Claycross. Neighbouring cottagers there in those far-off days were a Reuben Blair and a Simon Dale. In Simon Dale's small front garden was a telegraph-post, and for permitting its erection there Mr. Dale drew a few welcome shillings each year from the Telegraph Company (as it then was). One wild winter night the pole blew down and, falling upon neighbour Blair's roof, startled him (so he averred but with less delicate phraseology) out of a marital embrace and, worse, damaged the thatch and broke a dormer window. During the subsequent bickering, which led to much rummaging among old papers to produce title-deeds and other grotesquely-worded documents, there came to light the infuriating fact that the portion of Simon's garden containing the pole was, by the dumb witness of an old ordinance survey map, incontestably part of Reuben's property.

The light waxed and waned with its brilliant core. It

While the old men snarled and snapped and worked out by amazing feats of digital arithmetic a balance sheet and threatened each other with quasi-legal notes drawn up by the village shoemaker, the Telegraph Company, tiring of the dispute, obtained permission from the Parish Council to move the pole six feet (just that and no more), which brought it beyond both gardens to the edge of the grass verge flanking the little High Street. And there it stood fifty-five winters and summers until Sir Henry Sedon, driving to Sedon Hall for the Christmas holidays with his wife and lover (they were one and the same, for this is no light-o'-love tale) and son Robert (just released from the school cage), crashed into it in the darkness and woke three days later in Claycross Hospital to the grey realisation that his life had fallen into pieces about him. He buried his dead and shut himself up in Sedon Hall, to find what healing he might in the solitudes of that rather grim old manor.

I had written to him the sort of letter one writes upon these distressing occasions (with a helpless sense of its almost gross inadequacy). He did not reply. There was not even the customary general acknowledgment in *The Times*. I was, then, a little surprised to get a letter from him exactly a year later, just four days before Christmas. I was doubly surprised and not too pleased. He wanted me to make one of a party of a dozen or so guests at the Hall for a week, and suggested I should travel down on the twenty-third. I misjudged him to the point of thinking he 'd got over his loss and was proposing to make merry with friends in the traditional Christmas way. That the prospect of Yuletide jollifications with a crowd of probably strange people (so my peevish thought absurdly phrased itself) was no pleasing prospect to me must be ascribed to my set way—or rut, if you prefer it—of life. A bachelor of fiftyish, I had my own fashion of spending Christmas, and the habit of ten years may not be broken except at the cost of grievous exacerbation. I liked to stay at my club for the three or four days over the festival. There would be few others there, and those of like-settled habit (" self-centred gluttonous taciturnity," I 'd overheard a youngster call it) to myself. Even the staff chosen to be on duty (as a matter



began to take on some semblance of form, a sort of diffused human shape

of fact, most of them usually and gladly volunteered) were men of our own age, grave and steady and with perfect understanding of what we wanted. I used to look forward to those few quiet days when all the rest of the world was giving itself over to the most pathetic orgies of insincere gaiety. I could enjoy the club's good food and wine in peace and quiet; read the books I 'd not had time to read; smoke too many of the club's Havanas; doze luxuriously; play a rubber or so, or, if old Beardsley happened to be there, a game of chess—real chess, I assure you. Beardsley once beat Capablanca in a friendly at the club and several times afterwards held him to a draw. And I was to forfeit all this to go down into the wilds of Devonshire to make whoopee (or whatever they call it) with a mob of male and female clowns with neither palate nor wit in order to please a man who was, it seemed to me, tossing aside a bitter bereavement which, a bare twelvemonth earlier, had, according to the current tales, threatened his sanity. But, as I have said, we had once been cronies. We had fished together. And so I wrote accepting his invitation, and in a mood of almost malignant self-commiseration, I caught the one-thirty from Paddington on the afternoon of the twenty-third.

As Sir Henry hurried to greet me on my arrival, I realised how much I had misjudged him, and before many minutes had passed it was almost grotesquely clear that my preconception as to the sort of party I was joining was as wide of the mark as it could be. I must confess to an indifference to the troubles of others, nor am I easily moved by distressing appearances, but the first sight of my old friend startled and shocked me. My memory of him was a fine, muscular, athletic figure, fair-haired, bronzed, bright of eye, as good-looking as the Sedons were traditionally supposed to be. I saw a slightly-stooping, shrunken figure, the face putty-coloured, the eyes dull, the hair iron-grey—a sick, unhappy man drained of vitality. And my fellow-guests fitted the phrase, "a freakish lot," as no glove ever fitted a hand. With two exceptions, they were of middle age—late middle age, in fact—and, omitting the exceptions, numbered a dozen—seven women and five men. I don't think during my six days at the Hall I ever sorted them out into husbands and wives. I have no recollection of so doing: they remain in my memory merely as a group of pathetic and wealthy oddities. Wealthy? There was no doubt of that: it was flung in one's face with ludicrous effect at dinner that first evening when the faded women were decked and begemmed like Oriental goddesses, their plump or skinny arms and fingers and throats, sallow or trout-belly-white, glittering and scintillating and, without exaggeration, tinkling like those little Japanese toys one hangs in the garden to amuse the children. Pathetic? I will come to that in a moment. The two exceptions merit (a not very apt word !) more attention. One was a tall, fleshy, black-haired man in the middle thirties. He had a big nose, a heavy, black moustache over thick, red lips, and out of a dead-white face stared dark eyes of an almost incandescent brightness. Sir Henry introduced us in a queer fashion. After mentioning my name, he said: "This is Sylvester," and his manner and the big, dark fellow's

bow seemed to suggest that in those three words lay a whole world of explanation and—what shall I call it?—exegesis. Sylvester did not proffer his hand, so I merely nodded, mumbled the accepted inanities, and was not unrelieved to be led away to meet Miss Rachel Benson. Let me admit that she was worth meeting and seemed as out of place in that crowd of decorated oddmedods as a kingfisher would be in a rookery. I never learned how she came to be one of the party. She knew no one except Sir Henry, and all the time seemed conscious of how different she was from the rest of us. Words are poor, inadequate things when they attempt to describe a lovely young woman, and I 'll not therefore try to marshal and arrange mine to make a picture for you of Rachel Benson. She was slim and fair and dainty and indescribably alluring—I must leave it at that. Her age, I suppose, something under thirty. But I can't altogether leave it at that—I wish I could. Alluring, yes; but she was more: she was fascinating in a way that was almost indecently disturbing, absurd as the phrase sounds. Let me put it more bluntly still: she roused, dragged out of one, desire—inordinate desire—lust for her. One was bedevilled by it; wanted her; hated her and cursed one's self. Sheer drivelling, if you like; I don't believe in such things—or didn't until then. Oh, it was no mere freak of my fancy: the peculiar beast in her calling to the peculiar beast in me. All the men, except perhaps Sylvester, were subject to that damnable attraction, and one—Sir Henry himself—was abject under it, which was the most devilish thing of all considering the circumstances.

Those circumstances were these. You will probably have guessed them. I certainly had not done so up to this point, although I ought to have done. With my not-inconsiderable experience, Sylvester should have been a clue impossible to overlook. Briefly, then, Sir Henry, within a few months of the death of his wife and boy, had begun, out of his wretchedness, to try to get into touch with them through spiritualism. During the past seven or eight months he had attended scores of séances and become on intimate terms with the members of many circles and with their mediums, some of them famous—or notorious, whichever you prefer. Sylvester was just then the king of them all: he had a tremendous vogue and was in request everywhere. He had agreed to come down to the Hall for a week with the no less ambitious purpose than that of calling up from the dead Sir Henry's wife and boy. The rest of the party had all been chosen by Sir Henry himself from his new friends because of their possession either of psychic powers or intense psychic receptivity. This fails to account for me; I never learned why I was asked. Devilish is not, I think you will admit, phrasing it too strongly in connection with Sir Henry's abject thraldom to Rachel Benson. Consider it: he was clearly broken by the death of his wife and boy; he was devoting all his wealth and his body and spirit to an almost frenzied effort to get into touch with them. And struggle as he might against it, he was in a pitiful fever of desire for this young wanton.

I have called those men and women pathetic. The word is just. It may be difficult to make you see it as I saw it. Here were a dozen people in late middle life, men and women of wealth and leisure, the whole marvellous world at their call to minister to their pleasure and entertainment; and all they could do, all they were now capable of doing because of some bitter bereavement, was to quest about, tossed between the horns of hope and despair, from one medium to another, seeking communication with their loved dead. Their faces all wore (or so it seemed to me) the same wan, half-blank, half-fanatical expression; their bodies drooped slackly; their gestures were nervous and jerky, alternating with a sort of devitalised fluttering of hands, nodding or shaking of heads, and faint shoulder shruggings. And nearly all their conversation was of their dead and of the other world; of the messages and signs they had received, and of the still more intimate and wonderful manifestations they were passionately hoping to obtain through some medium more potent, more psychic, than any they had yet met. And here was Sylvester, the new master who was producing authentic miracles of communication, linking up the living and the dead in a way, so went the rumours passed from one circle to another, never before achieved in Western lands. He made no promises, but he said, in his rich, slow, heavy voice, that if conditions should prove right there ought to be sooner or later that week manifestations of the direct voice, and perhaps, if sufficient controlled power were evoked, generated, the building-up of presences, apparitions, a true and awesome raising of the dead, as real and visible (and possibly tangible) as the dead raised by the medium of Endor to prophesy lamentable things for King Saul.

Alluring, yes; but she was more

We had our first sitting in the library that evening about an hour after dinner. We sat round the large oak table, fifteen of us, our hands just touching in the darkness faintly mitigated by the glow of a ruby bulb. Sylvester went quickly into a trance with none of the accompanying tremblings and jerkings and gasping noises. Nothing happened for about fifteen minutes, and then there began a mild display of the childish phenomena common to such proceedings—rappings, cold currents of air, the touch of filmy things upon our faces, the asking and answering of questions and the successive assumptions by Sylvester of half a dozen different voices, one of which spoke in "pidgin" English. But that was all; a disappointing affair, and quite unworthy of the medium's reputation. Once or twice the big table moved—or rather, swayed—slightly, just before he came out of the trance, but nothing more. He sat up, coughed and clapped his hands, and someone switched on the lights. He explained with a smile that the conditions were very imperfect and that nothing else could be hoped for that evening. "We have in this circle," he said, "tremendous possibilities, but the spiritual power at present lacks cohesion; I suggest we do not sit again until the evening of Boxing Day, and meanwhile, by will and by prayer, each one of us must concentrate spiritual power." Everyone agreed to this; all seemed satisfied with what had been achieved, and, indeed, fulsomely grateful for his efforts.

We sat for the second time on the arranged evening between half-past nine and eleven, but with no more satisfactory results. There were a few additional phenomena—mild fragrances drifting about the room; a loud voice that boomed unintelligible things from somewhere near the ceiling, and an apported bunch of rather withered flowers that dropped suddenly upon the table. But this time, in coming out of the trance, Sylvester was greatly distressed, gasping and moaning and struggling; and when the lights were switched on his ashen face ran with sweat. "I have been in pain," he said, breathing hard. "Someone who passed over dreadfully was manifesting and wished to communicate but was held back. It was too soon; perhaps it was not permitted; I do not know. But, there!" and he smiled. "I have, I hope, good news for you. We are to try again, but not to-night nor to-morrow, but the following day between five and six in the evening. The time has been chosen for us. Meanwhile, I have to prepare myself for a supreme effort; I must fast to-morrow and remain in my room in prayer and it is asked of you all please to give as much time to prayer and concentration as possible." Again all were satisfied, all fulsomely grateful.

(Concluded on page iv)

"If ye want t' know, 'twas 'Har-r-k yon Her-r-ald Angels Sing'"

"Won't it put rather a dampēr ŏn things?"

"But my husband always *has* believed in Father Christmas"

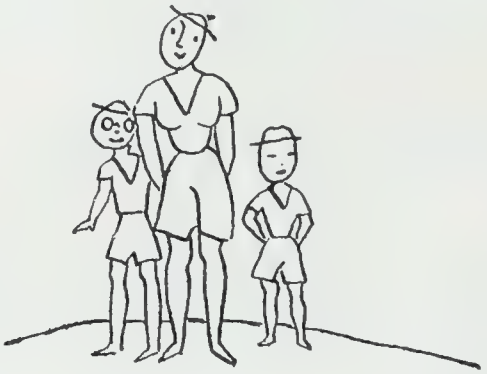
Pen and Think

Verses and Drawings by Stevie Smith

Author of "Novel on Yellow Paper"

Schoolgirl

I never learned to attract, you see,
And so I might as well not be;
A dreary future I see before me,
'Tis pity that ever my mother bore me



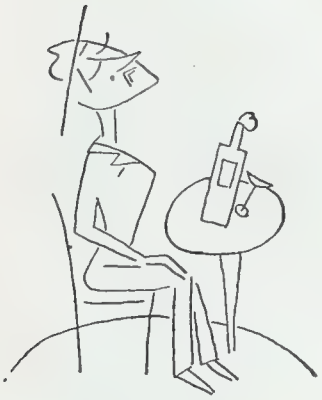
The Octopus

Darling little Tom and Harry,
When time comes for you to marry,
Lullaby,
Mother will be close at hand,
Close at hand

Little girlies, you who marry
Darling Tom and darling Harry
By and by,
Understand
Mother will be close at hand,
Close at hand

As Sways

As sways the gentle sycamore
Beneath the winds of heaven,
So sways my inconstant heart, dear love,
When you are far away;
So sways my inconstant heart, dear love,
And shall for ever sway.
No use for you to say:
"Better the oak by tempest riven
Than nodding sycamore beneath the winds of heaven"



Portrait

Mr. Petty-Pie
Keeps his masterpieces in his head,
He is a better tactician than I.

Silent, silent thought,
Never to be brought
To the printed page,
Weave a subtle shade
O'er the facey-fie
Of little Petty-Pie;
And may its lineaments continue to suggest
A wisdom too profound to be expressed

Two Friends

I only asked my friends to be friendly and polite,
I found them indifferent and censorious;
The one I left to silence, the other to reproach:
God send me over all such friends victorious

The Horrible Man

He is a most horrible man,
Why look?
He is a horrible man

He has done something at which the crocodile
Grew wan

He has never done anything at all—no, not by chance,
At which the crocodile kept
Countenance

He is a most horrible man

Le Modèle : by Drian

The Mummers: by Relf

J. S. GOODALL 37.
Christmas Day
1850

The Curious History

By W. D. H. McCullough

It was started by a gentleman who lived in a house with a beautiful view of the Northern Lights. One morning he got up, found it was snowing, and stepped on a couple of planks. As luck would have it, the underneath side of the planks was covered with wax, and the gentleman lived on the top of a hill. So, a fraction of a second later, he found himself going downhill at lightning speed. As he accelerated, he began to wonder how he was going to stop, when a large rock solved the problem for him. When he came to, he realised that he had invented ski-ing. So he sold the rights to some hardy chaps called Norwegians and retired to Bournemouth laughing quietly to himself.

The Norwegians, being very keen, saw at once that the inventor had little vision. In an amateur way he had established the fact that going slap into a rock had a fine tonic effect on the system. But that was all. The Norwegians, egged on by the tough nuts of Telemark, worked at it scientifically and discovered lots of new kinds of agonies. They found almost at once that you could try to change the direction of your descent—a manœuvre that nearly always put some muscles out of place. National champions could sometimes take a leg off when they did a perfect turn at speed. They also invented the Langlauf, a delicious sport, the object being to run uphill with skis on until the top of your head blows off. Even this got rather dull, and so they started throwing themselves off precipices. This had many names, the most polite being ski-jumping. The real enthusiasts came such a tremendous crash that it was rarely possible even to find the pieces. Jumping required a great deal of knack, and lots of people could only get as far as transfixing themselves on their ski-points.

At this stage of the proceedings a British tourist arrived, noticed bits of chaps flying in all directions, and saw at once that ski-ing had the basic requirements of a really good game—more alarming than hunting and rougher than Rugby. His only criticism was that the precipices in Norway were on

# of Ski-ing

Decorations by Fritz Lowen

too small a scale. So he bought some skis and went off to Switzerland, where the precipices were wonderful. The following year a great deal of Swiss milk was inaccurately condensed as a result of these early English sportsmen screaming down the mountains past the cows.

There was no elegance about the sport in those days. They wore whipcord riding breeches with reinforced seats, Norfolk jackets with leather elbows, a scarf and a Balaclava helmet, and carried a long, heavy pole which trailed behind to be sat on in an emergency.

After a year or two the Swiss people discovered that the British were doing this for fun, and so, very gingerly, one or two started the sport. Unfortunately, they liked it, and then things rapidly got more alarming. Skis began to have fibre edges. Then they had steel edges. The gentle old barge-pole was thrown away and ski-ers had to carry about a couple of light, flexible sticks with points like rapiers. Everyone in Europe began to ski. By this time, what had been originally a little genial insanity became a matter of international importance. People started to grind themselves into powder for their country's honour.

FINALLY, of course, an American had to come along. He said that ski-ing was the works and rushed back to New York and began making people do ski-jumping indoors without any snow.

To-day the prospects are more alarming than ever. The latest ski-jump is so high that the star competitors may easily elude the force of gravity completely and become comets. Steel edges are universal, and the really hearty chaps will no doubt be fitting their skis with landing-flaps.

The time seems to have come for the British to invent a new winter sport—something a bit slower and easier and more suitable for gentlemen who have been training on steak-and-kidney pudding and vintage port. It is impossible to keep up with everything these days. After all, we have an Empire to keep.

My Loves

Their Rise and Fall: by Helen Burnham

Patricia

Patricia was dainty as a Watteau shepherdess, fragile as a teacup. Narrow violet veins quivered across her eyelids. The tips of her slim fingers were tinted like bud-roses. As I encircled her slender waist it was as if I spanned a strip of mist . . . and I fell in love with Patricia.

I spilled a drop of orange pekoe on her dainty French frock and Patricia said, "Damn your awkwardness!" . . . and I fell out of love with Patricia.

Paula

Paula, as graceful as the Victory Goddess, skated across the frozen pond. Her red béret fell from her head and lay like a pool of hot blood on the cold ice. It began to snow. The flakes fell on Paula's uncovered hair and clung. It came to me suddenly how beautiful Paula would look with the silver locks of old age . . . and I fell in love with Paula.

The sun appeared and melted the snow on Paula's hair, which fell about her cheeks in drab, straggly wisps. The drops, trickling down, streaked her face with rouge . . . and I fell out of love with Paula.

Decorations by Phyllis Bray

Madeline

She lay on a couch of deep magenta velvet, the gold glow of a Chinese lamp suffusing her. Her gown was jade, the colour of her eyes, and scant. Her fragrance was of cyclamen. Her fingers were heavy with rings. She smoked a long amber cigarette. By her side was a teakwood table. On it was a bust of a satyr, a bowl of heavy red roses, a tall decanter, and a book of Sanscrit verse. Lazily she covered her lips with a rose petal . . . and I fell in love with Madeline.

Sitting at the side of Madeline, I dislodged a pillow. Beneath it was a novel by Edgar Wallace . . . and I fell out of love with Madeline.

Valerie

The chattering of butterfly-girls bored me. I saw Valerie. Valerie was as placidly browed as Juno. Her eyes behind wide spectacles were hothouse pansy beds. Her gown was a severely cut tweed; her shoes English and staunch. Under her arm she carried several stout-leathered books. Wearied of ballroom banter, I longed to converse with Valerie about Strabism and Adminthology and the Xiphias. "May I talk to you?" I entreated. She nodded . . . and I fell in love with Valerie.

I led her to a secluded alcove. "Some luck!" she said. "I hear you know Clark Gable. Tell me about him!" . . . and I fell out of love with Valerie.

"One Good Turn—"

The Unexpected Luck of a Sleepy Reporter

By Dorothy Black

Illustrated by C. F. Tunnicliffe

THE wind went walloping over the park, laden with a scurry of snow. It was the day before Christmas, a feast which to some men means glory, and to other men bills. The young man from the *Daily Crier* struggled with a tendency to fall asleep. On no account must he fall asleep.

The chance he had prayed for so long had come at last. They had given him the job of interviewing Lord MacLever, the Scottish oil magnate, newly returned from afar.

"See him. Get a real story. Then we 'll see about a rise in pay." That was what they had told him at the head office, and here he was, in the warm, luscious atmosphere of his Lordship's library. It was subtly scented with port and good cigar. Maybe this was what made the young man from the *Daily Crier* drowsy. This, plus a little private starvation. He had been going without lunch for some time for private reasons, courageously telling himself he was better without it. Marna was expecting her first baby. He wanted to give her every luxury and a crown of stars. On three pounds a week it was difficult. They ought not to have ventured on anything like a baby. It was a gross luxury. Yet, if they waited, it looked like waiting for ever. Great men spring from the unlikeliest beginnings. They said that over and over to comfort each other when they were together in the night season.

But these were not the thoughts to think when interviewing an oil magnate, trying to wring from him an arresting story. Something new. . . . The young man from the *Daily Crier* focussed his attention on Lord MacLever with a colossal effort. A great burly man he was, comfortable and well-liking now. His thick auburn hair was turning grey. Across one temple ran a thin scar, fading with time. If one could get the true tale of that scar now . . .

Lord MacLever ran on and on, and none of it was any good. The young man from the *Daily Crier* had heard it all before. Stale, it was. Moss-grown. Old as the hills. Bunk.

"I attribute my success in life to early rising, strict attention to business . . . punctuality. . . . If the young men of to-day would only realise . . ."

How was anyone to make an arresting story out of that sort of rubbish? The young man from the *Daily Crier* simply could not concentrate on it. He couldn't listen to it. He let his Lordship run on and on. In his mind he saw the dressing-gown he was going to buy for Marna. Blue, it was, lined with rose-coloured silk. He kept on seeing her little face, pinched, rather white these days. . . . They really shouldn't have embarked on a baby just yet. . . . They couldn't afford a proper bassinet for it. . . .

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head. . . .

Great men often came from the meanest beginnings. . . . He had bought a box of crackers, too, as a surprise for Marna. They would pull them on Christmas Day. If she was well enough . . .

"Abstinence from alcoholic beverages . . ." The old bore was burbling on and on. Far down the street a man was playing a cornet—

Peace on earth
And mercy mi-hild . . .

"Never shirking responsibility," the rich voice continued lusciously. There was no hint in it now of the old Scottish accent. It was cultured, smooth . . .

"I 'm falling asleep," thought the young man from the *Daily Crier* in a panic. "And I mustn't fall asleep. I 've got to make a story of some sort out of all this nonsense. If only he 'd tell me the truth! If only I dared tell him . . ."

Suddenly he felt immensely courageous. Suddenly he did not care if it snowed ink.

"If there is anything else you 'd like to ask . . ."

His Lordship folded his hands on his comfortable figure and leaned back in his upholstered leather chair.

"I 'd like to ask you a lot of questions, sir. But you wouldn't answer them. If I could get you to speak the truth my fortune would be made. They 'd give me a job on the staff. My wife is expecting her first baby. Another two pounds a week would mean a lot to me, though it doesn't mean much to you. Nothing you have told me so far is of the slightest use to anyone. But you have been very patient and kind . . ."

Faint, faint and far away, came the doleful strains—

Joyful all ye nations ri-hise,
Join the triumph of the ski-hies . . .

"*. . . Abstinence from alcoholic beverages . . .*" *The old bore was burbling on and on*

Things would never have gone as far as they did if that swine of a fellow hadn't drawn a knife

The policeman at the corner had moved the musician on. The thin notes died.

Funny. It wasn't a cornet any longer. It was the wail of a paddle steamer's siren, off down-stream. The river was wide and dirty greeny-grey, with scrub jungle coming down to the strip of sand that edged it.

Upon the strip of sand sat a long, young man with a small tin trunk. He had copper-colour hair that burned red where the sun caught it. Down one temple he had a long, livid scar.

He watched the departing steamer more in sorrow than anger. When the flag of smoke at its funnel had disappeared round the green bend, the mud-coloured nose of a crocodile appeared, and moved slowly along the back-wash. A large bird with a bony cranium, an obscene red neck, and a hungry eye let itself down from nowhere, like a ballet girl coming out of the wings on a wire, and seated itself gently a little way off.

It had the appearance of waiting for something.

Gordon MacLever looked at it, and burst out laughing. It was the dead spit of one of the elderly directors of that rice firm in Rangoon to which his loving family had thought they were sending him. Even now they would be busy penning letters—

Dear Sir,

We regret to tell you that your son, Gordon MacLever, has not arrived here as per schedule.

Or would they say "has not yet come to hand"? On the banks of the far Wangpo River, Gordon MacLever scratched his head and chuckled, and liked to think he had given the pious, psalm-singing lot of them one last and final shock.

He opened his tin trunk and took out some ship's biscuits and a half-empty bottle.

"Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die, if not to-day," said Gordon MacLever. "And as for you, old Johnnie Micking, take that!"

He threw the empty bottle at the vulture. It moved away gently two steps and looked pained.

Gordon MacLever pushed his old hat over his eyes, leaned back, and lit his last cigarette. Here he was—though where he was he had little idea. He had just let things slide and take their own course. The wind of chance blew him whither it listed.

It was a blast of respectability that had blown him out of Scotland. Lazing there on the strip of hot sand, he wondered whether the fellow really died. He would have stayed behind and faced the music if the family had let him. Murders and manses don't go well together. He quite saw his father's point. On the whole, he hadn't been much of a credit to them. He was, he supposed, just a ne'er-do-weel. It was all their fault for trying to urge him into the Kirk. . . . For being so down on a bit of manly sport. All young men poach in their youth. If they are men.

Things would never have gone as far as they did if that swine of a fellow hadn't drawn a knife. A dirty summer visitor from England. Unconsciously, Gordon MacLever's fingers went to the scar on his forehead. Livid, not yet quite healed. No Scotsman was going to stand that sort of thing from a dirty Sassenach . . .

"And they were my rabbits, anyway. I know my own snares. What does a dirty lout of a Southerner know about making snares? Hung the whole countryside with great loops like a woman's garter, he did. No self-respecting rabbit would stick its head into a thing the like of that!"

On the distant bank of the Wangpo, Gordon MacLever laughed scornfully. Alexander Monteith Paterson . . . a weedy fellow with a long snout. It was entirely thanks to him that Gordon was here. Otherwise he might have been driving a pen in an office in Edinburgh. . . . Aye, but he'd been a nasty sight when he lay there, all crumpled up . . .

"I wonder, did he die?" mused Gordon MacLever. Well, what did it matter? One Scotsman was worth ten Englishmen any day. Not that he liked the idea of being a murderer. Not at all. But if it had to be someone then he'd as lief it was Alexander Monteith Paterson as anyone. The world was well rid of the like of him.

Oh, the coming and going! . . . Oh, the hey-tutt-mutt! His father praying over him. The old laird writing condescending letters to friends abroad. The entire family lugging out their stockings full of bawbees in a concentrated and enthusiastic effort to send their loving nephew away as far and as soon as possible.

Well, here he was. But he wasn't where they thought he was, and he had no intention of going there. He would live his life in his own way, and die a grand, noble death and snap his fingers at the whole pappy psalm-singing lot of them.

He jumped ship at Colombo. He pawned everything but the bare necessities of life there, but stuck to his bagpipes. He hardly knew why; they were useless lumber. The sentimentality of the Scot manifests itself in wondrous ways.

He stowed away as far as Hong Kong, all amongst the ship's cats and cockroaches. They threw him off when they found him. He worked his way up to Shanghai, peeling potatoes in the galley, emptying the officers' slops. Yo-ho for the life of a sailor!

At Shanghai he jumped a riverine steamer bound north, and sat upon her

jovially till they discovered he couldn't pay his fare. Then they put him off, and here he was.

It was a simple enough port of call, the landing-stage nothing but a plank run down from the ship and pulled in again. Four Chinamen, with hanging baskets on poles, disembarked with him. They disappeared into the jungle with a noiseless little trot.

Still, four Chinamen with baskets meant there must be habitations of some sort at hand. Gordon MacLever picked up his wee tin trunk and passed along the little trot-track through the jungle, under the shadow of the trees.

The sun was high and merciless. Strange birds yodelled in the forest. Gordon MacLever knew nothing about that part of the interior where he now found himself. He had no notion where he was going.

He came to a straggling village inside a stockade.

It was little more than a series of huddled mud-houses. Flat, yellow faces peered at him from window-spaces, with button eyes. The noontide hush lay over all, and it was very quiet.

"Phew!" said Gordon MacLever. He put down his wee tin trunk and he took off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair.

Then he stood amazed. That seemingly innocent action appeared to act like a spell. The noontide hush was broken. The village hummed like a hive of waking bees. He was now aware of being observed extensively and furtively. He was now aware of being followed, quite extensively and at a distance, by a crowd that kept out of sight. Only, a myriad yellow faces peered at him round corners, a myriad yellow feet made a whisper in the thick dust.

So he strode hatless through the village, amused and not at all frightened, for there wasn't one of them came up to his oxter. Like Gulliver amongst the pigmies he felt, and so secure.

Round a corner he met an old man with a walkee-walkee duck farm taking up the dusty road from end to end. The old man gave him one look. His eyes grew round. His mouth turned to a little "o," emitting a thin, high scream. He departed at a run, his ducks flapping and scuttering round him.

Not unpleased at the impression he created, Gordon MacLever sat down in the shadow of a high wall that cast a line of merciful shade over the dusty noontide. He leaned on his wee tin trunk and took a rest.

He dozed.

Through his mind a medley of faces soared and merged into one another and disappeared in the uneven haze of dreams. His father, uncommon pious, serious as a billy-goat. His brother Alec, mild as a hen, and heading for the ministry like a sheep heads for home at evening. His mother . . . the old laird . . . the long face of Alexander Monteith Paterson, main cause of all the trouble, they swam together all mixed with the coconut-oil scented charms of a dark little girl who had made him laugh in Colombo . . .

He opened his eyes with an effort. His dreams had suddenly merged into nightmare. He was surrounded by a sea of yellow faces, flat, expressionless, with gleaming button eyes. Over him bent an old, old Chinaman with a thin, grey beard on the end of a thin, grey face.

"It's the queer foods I've eaten of late," thought Gordon MacLever, and he tried to move. He tried to rouse himself. Presently these faces also would fade, would change and merge into something else.

But they did not change.

Then he discovered his arms were tied behind him, and he could not move. Tethered he lay, as Gulliver was tethered by the pigmies. The ropes were very cleverly arranged, too, as he soon found out. If you rugged and tugged on one, it tightened another, and in some uncomfortably tender place.

He didn't understand a word of their language, so he couldn't make out what the hee-ings and the haw-ings were all about. They hove him up and propelled him from behind through a wooden door in the high wall.

"Bring ma wee tin box!" cried Gordon MacLever. It came after him, borne on willing yellow shoulders.

Here was a queer kettle of fish, and here a rummy go.

Inside the stone wall there was a garden. Intricate, all little pathways leading here and there past laid-out beds, and peach-trees in full bloom. Little bridges spanned pools where goldfish floated, waving silken draperies like fantastic dancers.

"Like a blinking willow-patterned plate," said Gordon MacLever, staring about him. And it struck him that once he got far inside this maze he would never get out again, and he made one superhuman effort to burst his bonds, which resulted in the tightening of a rope about his neck that almost choked him.

"It is best not to struggle," said a gentle voice in English. It was the old Chinaman with the grey face, the thin, grey beard. He walked with his hands tucked in the sleeves of his blue gown, wearing a black cap with a golden button on it.

"What are you doing with me?" asked Gordon MacLever, angrily. "Do ye no ken I'm a British subject?"

They merely propelled him further up the complicated hillside until they reached the temple.

(Continued on page 70)

No music like it in the world, thought Gordon

Weeds from Poetry's

The funniest thing about Jack
Was the shape of his legs at the back.
It may have been gout
That made them stick out—
Or merely a muscular knack

The wife of a wealthy stockbroker
Indulged in a game of strip poker;
She consistently lost,
But the game was a frost
As her husband decided to cloak her.

A dyspeptic once said to his spouse,
"I am thinking of building a house
With a windowless room
In which I can gloom
And a cellar in which I can grouse."

Many said, and with truth, I admit,
That Jones had been drinking a bit
When he lowered a mouse
Down the Duchess's blouse
And ruined her cellular knit.

Garden: By Frank Ford

A lady from Southampton West
Once knitted her husband a vest;
The arms were so long
They 'd have fitted King Kong,
But it clamped like a vice on his chest.

An unemployed cracksman named Shane
Once held himself up in a lane,
He threatened his life
With a murderous knife
And stole his own gold watch and chain.

An eccentric residing at Sheen
Had peculiar ideas on hygiene;
It was better, he guessed,
To bath fully dressed
As it kept the enamelwork clean.

The behaviour of Winifred Hocking
While following hounds was most shocking;
She trailed the poor fox
Down a hole in the rocks
And strangled the thing with her stocking.

Said the Wagon to the Star

A Romance Made to Publicity's Order

By Claudia Parsons

Illustrations by Clark Fay

I.

AMBROSE met her first at a charity ball where they were never introduced and only danced together by accident. Her hair was then fair and her face was just natural creation. To Ambrose the Grecian features seemed vaguely familiar. He danced in silence wondering where he could have seen them before. Then, "Got it!" he said aloud, and quoted from the illustrated papers:

"'THE HON. FELICITY FOYLE, LOVELIEST DEBUTANTE OF THE SEASON.' 'LORD PORT LEA'S DEBUTANTE DAUGHTER HELPS ORGANISE CHARITY BALL.' Aren't I right?"

She blushed. Ambrose had seldom seen a naked face clothed only in a blush. He decided that conversation was useless; that the chicken just out of the egg was a crude object. He just danced, till a blinding flash made both of them wince. "Oh, those photographers!" said she, and little did he realise the depth of the remark.

II.

"WELL, Ambrose, I see you got off with the belle of the ball the other night," said Gordon Bright. He was Ambrose's lifelong friend and gossip-writer for the *Talk of London*.

"I don't remember any belle."

"Ambrose, I could *make* you, if you 'd only keep on like that. If you 'd just give yourself into my hands and stop bothering about the acting, I 'd get you the grandest publicity. Take a look at this!"

Gordon laid on the table the *Talk of London*, and went away. In it there was a picture of a man and a girl dancing together with eyes tightly closed, and under the photograph was written:

"*I saw the Hon. Felicity Foyle, this season's most popular debutante, dancing with Ambrose Walker, the promising young actor just now rehearsing for the West End production, 'A Man About Town.'*"

"Well I 'm damned!" said Ambrose.

His lines in *A Man About Town* occupied just ten seconds: "Excuse me, sir. I think I ought to tell you. In my flat I can hear every word you say."

III.

PHOTOGRAPHS of the Hon. Felicity Foyle began growing commonplace. They now appeared under:

POPULAR DEBUTANTE TO WED.

All details were given. She was marrying Sir Henry Mallet, Bt., son of the late Sir Croquet Mallet. Sir Henry spent most of his time at Barrocks, his country seat, where he was Master of the Wrigley foxhounds. And sometimes there would be an inset of Sir Henry, but more often it was found better to give just the details.

"I 'm making a big scoop out of this wedding," said Gordon. "Felicity 's a gold-mine. Look at this!" And Gordon showed Ambrose a sheaf of photographs and typewritten matter going to press:

BRIDE-TO-BE ORDERS THOUSAND YARDS CRÊPE-DE-CHINE.

SCOTCH HANDS WORK OVERTIME ON TWEED FOR SOCIETY BRIDE.

PEDIGREE HUNTER AS WEDDING PRESENT FROM BRIDEGROOM.

"Well, see here," said Ambrose. "Tonight I, too, am going to make a scoop. For months I 've been understudying Hamilton King, and now at last he 's got chicken-pox. London is going to discover me. What can you do about that?"

"Ah, that 's more difficult," said Gordon, sobering down. "Still, I 'll see if I can't work you in on something."

IV.

PEOPLE are very conservative. At the end of the evening London still seemed to prefer Hamilton King. But Ambrose went on to a party. The invitation was issued to Hamilton, but Ambrose continued acting for Hamilton even after the performance was over, and at the party no one seemed to notice that he was Ambrose.

Quite soon he was confronted by a very striking-looking girl. Her hair had subtle lights of gold in it, and her Cupid's bow of a mouth was ruled out by a straight line of carmine.

"I think you 're wonderful!" she said. "I 've been three times to watch you in *A Man About Town*."

"Have you?" said Ambrose. "How very extraordinary!"

"I 'd love to go on the stage," she continued with enthusiasm.

"I shouldn't. It 's too like work."

"But I 'd love to work. What sort of a life is it, anyway, being engaged to a sporting baronet?"

"Oh? Oh, of course! Yes, I know. Harry Mallet!"

"D'you know him?"

"Oh, no. I 've only seen pictures—I mean, I don't really know anything about it at all. I think you 're very lucky."

"I don't. I sometimes think I 'll give it all up."

"Come, come! You mustn't disappoint those Scotch Hands. What about all that tweed?"

"Don't *talk* to me of tweed!" she said.

V.

HOW that party ended Ambrose would never have known but for the *Talk of London*. He remembered alternately drinking whisky and champagne. He remembered that next morning. But soon there were pictures of Felicity Foyle in all the papers, accompanied by headlines such as:

BREAKS BETROTHAL WITH BARONET.

FORMER FIANCE FORSAKES FOX-HUNTING FOR FOOTLIGHTS.

FELICITY FOYLE TO BECOME FELICITY FOLYE. IS THIS FOLLY?

But the *Talk of London* went further. Beneath an exclusive photograph was written:

"*Miss Foyle and the Man About Town! Amusing climax to M. Pavlowski's successful party. Was it here that Miss Foyle was influenced in taking up a stage career?*"

And the photograph showed various stage celebrities snuggling round a workman's brazier on the London-Dorking main road. The figure nearest the camera was Ambrose, and sharing his coat was the Hon. Felicity Foyle.

"What made you print all that stuff?" said Ambrose to Gordon Bright over the 'phone. "You 'll have Sir Harry challenging me to a duel or something."

"Ah, if only he would!" said Gordon.

But Sir Harry, in the gun-room of Barrocks, was saying: "When a filly 's got her mind set on anything, give her the bit and let her have her head. It 's the only way."

VI.

IT was Elsa Cameron's outdoor party. Elsa's idea of fun was Japanese lanterns and a quartette of female voices. All the theatrical world was there under moral obligation. Gordon Bright was also there. Between the bouts of song Ambrose went over to Gordon. "So the wedding never came off?" he said maliciously. "Nor the duel?"

"No. Pity about the duel. The wedding didn't matter. Much better like this. Felicity 's big news for years yet and I 'm her advertising manager. Did you see she 'd got another lead?"

" Yes. Thanks to all that tripe you keep writing about her finger-nails. But not, I fancy, thanks to her acting."

" So you 're still troubling about the acting ? Now, Ambrose, if only you 'd take my advice ! I could easily arrange—" Here Gordon lowered his voice and said, " Hush ! "

Down the path came a platinum blonde. In the light of the Japanese lanterns nothing much could be seen of her beyond the platinum, which was almost luminous. " Is there no refreshment at this sordid entertainment ? " she was saying to the man beside her, who was Hamilton King.

" Must be, darling. But you know what our Cameron *is*. Likes one thing at a time."

" I know where there 's a bar," said Ambrose. " I 've seen it."

" Lead me to it," said the Platinum, and put her hand on Ambrose's arm. He looked down and recognised the famous blue finger-nails, but at that moment the quartette again burst into song from the balcony. They had done it now nearly a dozen times, yet each time it made one jump. It was like the breaking of shrapnel overhead.

The guests stood like petrified trees while the female voices warbled and heynonneyed from above. But there was one guest who was not paralysed like the rest. He stole away and crept back with the photographer, and as the last warbles died, and the stiffened guests came back to life, " Hold it a minute," said a voice, and there was a flash over the startled head of Ambrose.

" This party 's ruining my nerves," said he.

" Hold it a minute," said a voice, and there was a flash over the startled head of Ambrose

"Look here," he said, "Gordon says we've got to have a child"

VII.

PHOTOGRAPHS of Ambrose with Felicity on his arm appeared in all the papers, while the *Talk of London* said :

"Miss Cameron's parties are always a happy background for romance. One wonders what soft words were passing between Mr. Walker and Miss Folye when this photograph was taken."

"Soft words!" said Ambrose, when he read this and remembered how he had muttered through the warblings of the songsters, "Wonderful to be able to do that on an empty stomach!" and Felicity had answered, "Perhaps the stomach has to be empty or you can't do it."

"What's the idea?" said Ambrose to Gordon. "All these insinuations about me and Felicity!"

"Well, I hate to see you bitter about things, Ambrose. I thought I'd help you. Ever heard the motto, 'Hitch your wagon to a star'?"

"Yes, I have. And I don't like it. And I don't like the star. And if I'm to rise to fame, it's going to be on my *acting*."

VIII.

BUT even success tends to become boring. Having secured for Felicity three successive leads, and the promise of another in *Mind the Paint* with the same rôle in the film version, Gordon decided that Felicity must go on a holiday. He would send her to Morocco. But he wrote up :

"Tired out by her ceaseless engagements, Miss Folye has decided to go abroad for a month, but I could not get her to tell me where she was going or with whom."

Then Gordon posted a Press photographer on the quayside at Southampton to catch Felicity going aboard the Holland Star.

Ambrose, when he read of Felicity's holiday abroad, heaved a sigh of relief. He would feel safer when that woman was out of the country. But by a stroke of ill-luck, his best friend was sailing by the Holland Star to take up business in the Dutch East Indies, and, all unaware of danger, Ambrose went to see him off at Southampton.

As they approached the ship's side, Ambrose saw that a really beautiful girl was walking past them. Her hair was auburn ; she had ravishing dimples and a pert, tip-tilted nose.

It was very natural that he should contrive to reach the gangway at the same time as the beauty, and he was just at her side when there was an ominous click, and Ambrose found himself looking into a Press photographer's camera.

Realisation dawned. "I think I'll leave you here," he said nervously to his friend, and he hastened back to town. Already the evening papers were parading his face beside that of Felicity's and announcing in large print :

THE SECRET IS OUT!

"Here, you public menace!" said Ambrose, bursting into Gordon's rooms. "I've had enough of this!"

"Marvellous idea, Ambrose! Came to me when that photograph was brought into the office this afternoon. You've got to marry Felicity."

IX.

MARRY Felicity!

"Danged if I will!" were Ambrose's first ungracious words. But then he began to think of those dimples and that tip-tilted nose, and he said to himself : "Well, why not?" But with Felicity, appearances were so temporary. How could he be sure that her nose would be tip-tilted when next they met? But Gordon said that it would be. It was for the film part in *Mind the Paint* that she had had it remodelled and had gone to Tangier while it set.

"But I don't see how this marriage is going to help me otherwise," said Ambrose.

"My dear fellow, do as I say and I can guarantee you a lead in *Mind the Paint*, both stage and film."

"But Felicity's in Morocco."

"And you've gone with her, don't forget! Now all you've got to do is to sneak out there quietly, and then marry her loudly. You're not in a show just now, and I'll pay your passage. And I'll tell you another thing. Did you know Sir Harry had been killed fox-hunting?"

"No."

"Well, he has, and between you and me, though the will is not yet proven, I believe he's left all his money to Felicity."

Ambrose decided to marry. It was only as he was leaving the office that he suddenly said : "But I say, what about Felicity? Supposing she objects?"

"Felicity won't object," said Gordon. "She's got that which has made, and always will make, a star!"

"And what's that?"

"Absolute faith in her advertising manager."

X.

THEY were married at the British Consulate in Tangier and the news was flashed all over the world. Felicity had not altered much, except that she had gone back to platinum. "Couldn't we have the eyebrows an inch lower?" asked Ambrose on the eve of their wedding.

Their honeymoon was very happy except for the continual clicks and flashes that still made Ambrose jump.

"Those darned photographers!" he said one day, and then he added : "Funny, but those were practically the words you

(Concluded on page 53)

Celebrate with Dewar's

"White Label"!

1684: Sir John Evelyn
Crossing the Frozen River

The Frozen Thames:

1814: the Last Frost Fair on the River

Murals for Great Westminster House, by Flora Lion, R.P.S.

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Are you perplexed by the conflicting claims of motor cars, diamonds, and fur coats as acceptable little Christmas presents? (Any day now you may have to dodge advertisements compelling you to 'Give Her a Giraffe this Christmas!') Then you will be relieved by this reminder that as Greys are very good cigarettes, so they make very good inexpensive gifts.

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Ski-ers Delight : "Deep and Crisp and Even"

SNOW FOLLY

Photographs by Dr. B. Kröhn

Roye

"Brightly shone the moon that night, though the frost did freeze,
When an old mouse came in sight, gathering winter che-e-ese"

The Clown: by Edward Seago

"Les Patineurs" at Sadler's Wells: by Wil

liam Chappell, Who Designed the Sets and Dresses for the Ballet

The Tree: by Rojan

John Everard

London Types : the Postman

John Everard

London Types: the Gas Man

"Did you say there was trouble with the meter, mum?"

John Everard

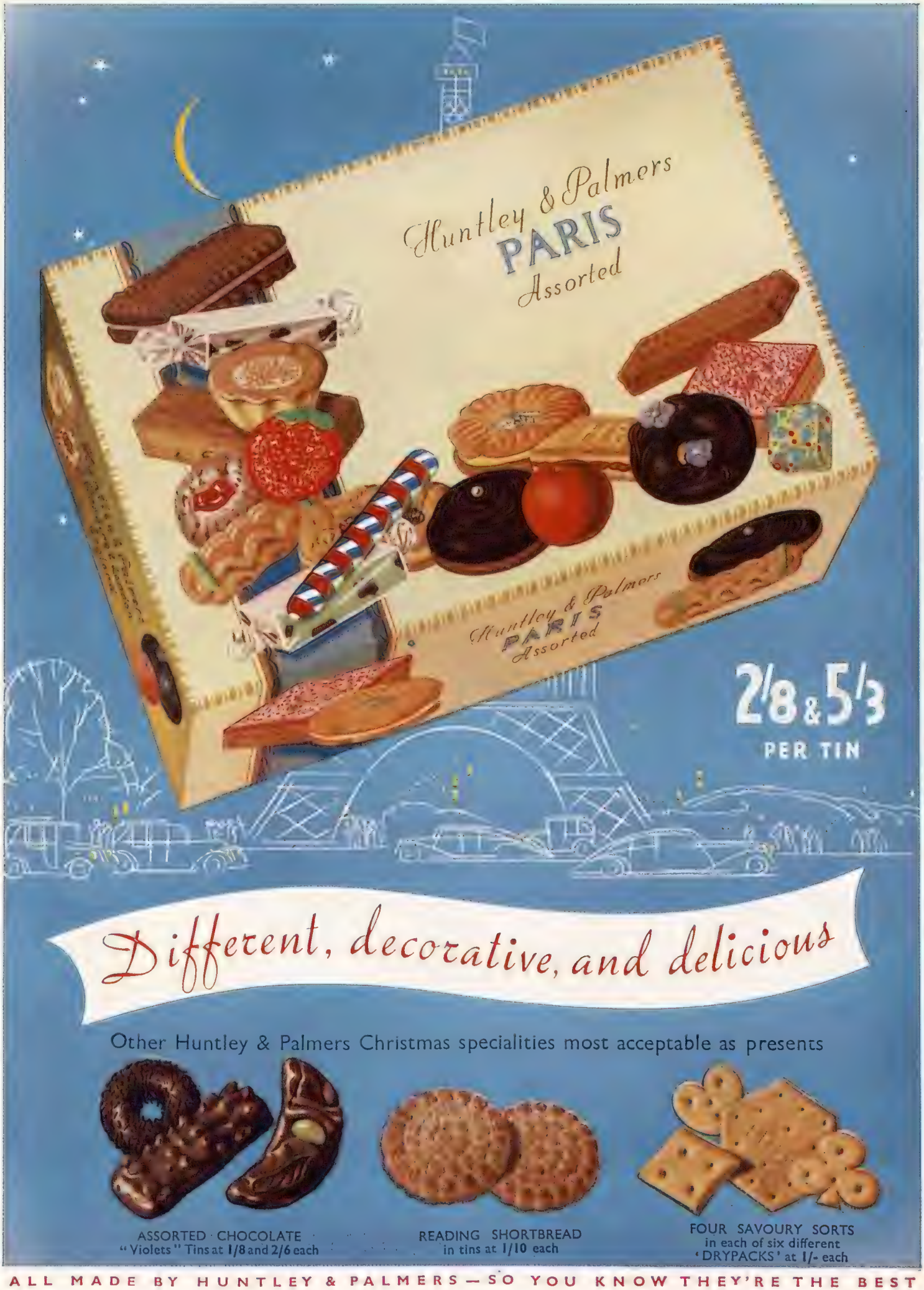
London Types : the Charlady

"It came away in me 'and, mum!"

John Everard

London Types: the Theatre Queue Entertainer

"Sketchy" Wood has been entertaining London theatre queues with his lightning caricatures and sketches for about eight years. That is, since the "Geddes axe" put him out of his job as a clerk in the Civil Service. He discovered his talent during the war, when he used to amuse his comrades in the trenches the same way as he now pleases the camp-stool queues. He has music-hall ambitions



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"Violets" Tins at 1/8 and 2/6 each

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in tins at 1/10 each

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A selection of finest Scotch Shortbreads, Chocolate-coated Biscuits, etc., from the wide range of seasonable goods offered by McVitie & Price.

Sold by all good Grocers and Confectioners.

★ **THISTLE SHORTBREAD**
2/6 per tin (Enamelled tin)

★ **TEATIME ASSORTED**
4/6 per drum (Enamelled tin)

★ **THE BLUE TIN**
1/6 per tin (Enamelled tin)

★ **ROSES**
2/6 per tin (Enamelled tin)

GALWAY ★
1/6 per tin (Enamelled tin)

★ **FLORAL**
2/- per tin (Enamelled tin)

★
LOCH AWE SHORTBREAD
4/6 per tin

TABLE ★
1/6 per tin (Enamelled tin)

Said the Wagon to the Star

(Continued from page 32)

said when we first met. Must have been prophetic."

"When did I say them?"

"Oh, ages ago, in London."

"But have I ever met you before?"

"Why, yes. Don't you even remember Pavlowski's party?"

"Were *you* there? I don't remember anybody that night except Hamilton." And then she added: "Hamilton *will* be fed up that I 've got married."

"Yes," said Ambrose uneasily. "I wonder if Gordon . . ."

XI.

THE papers were filled with their photographs, entitled:

AMBROSE AND FELICITY.

But they didn't bother to read about themselves during their holiday; it was only when they got back to London that they began mugging up their lives' history.

Felicity had loved Ambrose from the first, but when he had gone on the stage her father had threatened to cut her off if she had anything to do with actors or acting. And what had this noble girl done, whose most outstanding quality was fidelity? She had sacrificed honours, wealth and a dazzling match, to join Ambrose. And now, an independent star, and having won her way through, she was able to give Ambrose the chance he had so long deserved. In *Mind the Paint* she would be acting opposite her husband, the only man she really . . .

Mind the Paint was packed out and ran for a considerable period, and Ambrose and Felicity drew large salaries in the film version. Ambrose began to think that Gordon had, after all, been right.

The only thing was, that in their story as told by Gordon, there was no space given to Hamilton King. Yet in their actual lives, Hamilton seemed to take up a bigger space than Ambrose . . .

XII.

"MUST see you to-morrow important," telegraphed Ambrose to Felicity. "Meet me bar Hopsack lunch," telegraphed Felicity.

He had some difficulty in finding her. She was now a brunette with gipsy features. But there was no time to discuss that. "Look here," he said, "Gordon says we 've got to have a child."

"*What!*"

"Well, he says that he 's been writing so much about our domestic bliss and your love of home that the picture isn't complete——"

"Really, there are limits!"

"That 's what I said."

"Couldn't we hire one?"

"My dear, you 'd have to be photographed going to a nursing-home and coming out again and, well, judging by our honeymoon, there 'd be a good many pictures inside the nursing-home, too."

Ambrose didn't add that Gordon had offered him a bonus on each child. He felt that the bonus ought to be his property. Since the withdrawal of *Mind the Paint*, Ambrose's rôle seemed more and more to be that of domestic background, while Felicity drew, and spent, enormous salaries. She wasn't really extravagant, but Gordon kept thinking out extravagances for her, and Sir Harry's money had, in the end, been left to the Blue Cross for the care of animals.

So Ambrose felt entitled to the bonus on the children. In fact, every time he was hard up he would telegraph to Felicity that Gordon thought there ought to be another. There were eventually three little ones, and a photographer almost permanently in the nursery. Every now and again Felicity came home to be photographed with Ambrose and the children.

XIII.

THEN one day, Ambrose overheard two people talking: "Isn't it dreadful? Felicity and her husband parting company? And after ten years. It just shows!"

Ambrose, from long experience, questioned Gordon rather than Felicity.

"What 's this about our marriage breaking up?" he said.

"Sorry, old chap, but it had to be, sooner or later. She 's divorcing you and marrying the Earl of Marsh and Mallow. It 's the best way to wind up a star. Marry with the aristocracy and retire."

"But, damn it, she came from the aristocracy! She did everything she could to get away from it."

"Well, back she goes! It 's a haven for stars."

"But what about me? You don't seem to realise that I 'd grown fond of her."

"Ah, I know! That 's so often the painful side of it. But she 's letting you have the children."

Ambrose went back to the nursery. He looked at the row of white cots and thought of the responsibilities tucked up inside them and then he thought of the emptiness of his purse, and he emitted a low groan.

"What is the matter, Daddy?" said the voice of the eldest responsibility.

"Everything," said Ambrose.

"Daddy, tell me a story."

"My boy, I will. When you 're growing into a man, Ambrose Junior, people will say to you, 'Ambrose! Hitch your wagon to a star.' Well, don't you do it!"

THE END.

"People will say to you, 'Hitch your wagon to a star.' "Well, don't you do it!"

Those Christmas Books Again!

By Herbert Farjeon

Grown-ups will relish assisting the children

I AM happy to announce that a general survey of the books for tots of all ages with which the market has been flooded this December reveals the fact that they more than maintain the high standard of excellence to which readers of Christmas reviews must by now have become so accustomed.

This is due partly to the fact that publishers have increased their advertisements in Special Christmas Literary Supplements by something like 25 per cent.; partly to the fact that when literary critics receive from lavish editors parcels containing over a score of volumes, all to be dealt with in a space of not more than 350 words, and at the usual rates, it is simpler to praise them than to read them; and partly to the fact that these books are, after all, only for children, so why worry?

In the case of the particular vanload of volumes delivered at my own door the other morning, I find myself in a peculiarly unfortunate position, since, when I sat down to review them, I discovered to my no small annoyance that in the interval I had inadvertently taken them to my bookseller and there disposed of them at the customary cut prices.

In the circumstances, I am compelled to rely on my memory and past experience. Should I have committed any errors in setting down the titles of the books and the names of their authors, and should you, in consequence, find yourself unable to procure my recommendation, I can only assure you that, if I had known anything about it, you will have little difficulty in obtaining something as near as makes no difference. And so, dear reader, here goes.

INFALLIBLE ANNUALS

To begin with the annuals. These are always hailed with whoops of delight by the younger generation, and none, I may fearlessly predict, will be more warmly received than that of *The Boobly-Goobly Annual*, in which the repartee of these mischievous sprites is so deliciously redolent of the Yankee hobo. This may be set down as a genuine contribution to child literature. So, for the matter of that, may *The Mumby-Jumbies* and *The Toshy-Sloshies*, whose pages will be eagerly scanned this winter over many an electric stove. The numerous pictures, specially printed on cheap paper, in which the latest adventures of the Mumby-Jumbies and the Toshy-Sloshies are graphically set forth, will, it is safe to predict, be scribbled over by the infant populations of innumerable nurseries—and what sounder tribute could they receive than this? That many grown-ups will relish assisting the children in this occupation is a foregone conclusion.

OUR HELPFUL RE-WRITERS.

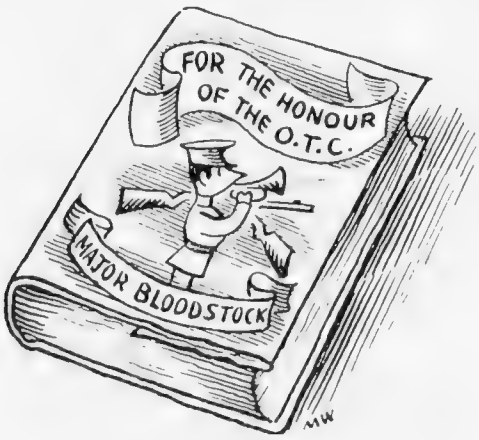
YOUNGSTERS are always clamouring to have Grimm's fairy-tales told and re-told. This may be regarded as more than sufficient excuse, if excuse were needed, for the issue of Mr. R. E. Hash's latest little masterpiece, *Grimm's Fairy-Tales Re-told for Children*. This book supplies at last a very long-felt want. The surprising thing is that it has not been done before. What Mr. Hash has done for the Brothers Grimm, Miss Tinker has done for Charles and Mary Lamb. It is not too much to say that her *Tales from Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare* richly deserves a place on the bookshelf side-by-side with the original, which is likely to be more widely read in future now that Miss Tinker has cleared the way.

An unusually interesting venture is the publication of the first volume, in a new and go-ahead series, now being put forward under the general title, *D. H. Lawrence for the Tots*. The excellent plan of the editors is to present the works

Sketches by Mervyn Wilson

. . . Hailed with whoops of delight

"D. H. Lawrence for the Tots"



Major Bloodstock's latest yarn

. . . On the same hayrick with the Headmaster

of this famous novelist in words which any little girl or boy may understand and even use. If the volumes still to come are as well done as *La-dy Chat-ter-iy's Close Friend*, there should be no cause for complaint.

ALICE HERSELF AT LAST.

UNQUESTIONABLY one of the most delightful gift-books of the year is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by Mr. B. Cheeke. So many artists in the past have failed in their laudable attempts to improve on Sir John Tenniel's drawings, that it has been decided this year to reverse the customary plan of operations and, retaining the original pictures, to provide them with an entirely new text. It is anticipated that Mr. Cheeke's fresh touch will prove more acceptable to children of modern times than that displayed by Lewis Carroll in his now rather worn-out classic. His explanation of how Alice got her long neck is one of his happiest strokes, and will be acknowledged by many readers as a great improvement.

NEW SCHOOL STORIES.

As usual, school stories this year are much to the fore. *Montessori Monty* should appeal to a vast army of mites, while among older children patriots, if not pacifists, will be sure to revel in Major Bloodstock's latest yarn, *For the Honour of the O.T.C.*

It is, by the way, refreshing to find at last a school story with a real love-interest—in fact, quite a number of real love-interests. For *Co-Educating Cora* we predict one of the biggest successes of the holidays, if only on account of the capital chapter in which Cora, the Head Girl, and Cyril, the Head Boy, find themselves on the same hayrick with the Headmaster and the Games Mistress.

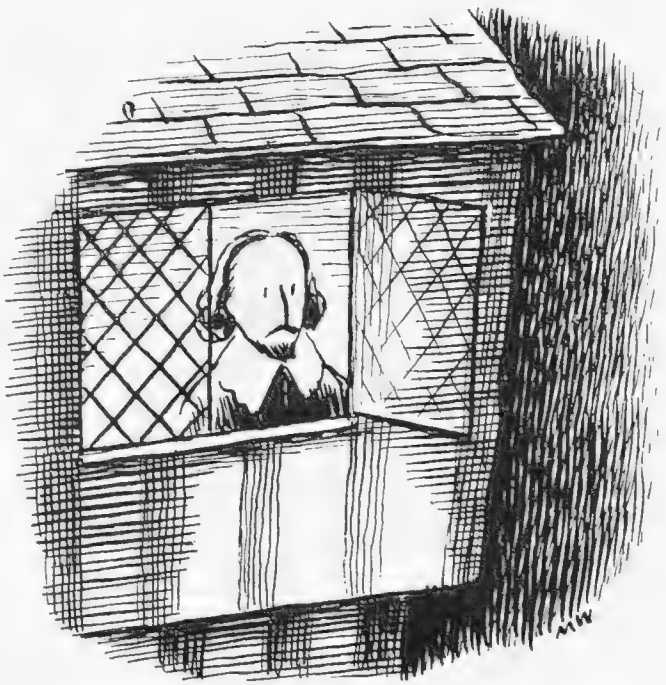
Among other choices which we would recommend to the attention of harassed parents this Christmas are *What Every Girl Guide Ought to Know*, which comprehensively covers the whole field; *The Boys' Book of Gangsters*, a colourful compilation no healthy-minded youth could fail to enjoy; and *Freddie Goes Franco*, a very jolly story of the Spanish Civil War.

ABSOLUTELY DE LUXE.

TURNING, finally, to Christmas books issued for more mature tastes, I have no hesitation in recommending without exception the forty-nine new illustrated editions de luxe of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, none of which costs more than two guineas. These are of such uniform merit, that all or none would seem to be the only alternatives.

Or perhaps you would prefer the *Sonnets of Shakespeare*, with one hundred and fifty-four tasteful pictures in colour, one for each sonnet. Beautifully reproduced on art paper in art colours, they succeed in bringing the poems to life as never before, depicting, as they do, the Swan of Avon now making himself "a motley to the view," now beholding "the brave day sunk in hideous night," and now reclining on a mossy bank at the feet of the alluring and much-discussed Dark Lady.

It only remains to be added that all and any of the above would make "an ideal Christmas gift." And that if publishers will kindly quote these words in their advertisements with my name after them, I shall feel that I have not reviewed in vain.



. . . Beholding "the brave day sunk in hideous night"

Two Studies in Social Deportment

Above and Below Stairs

By Frank Ford

Yes, thought Miss Willow . . . . a very much nicer way of spending Christmas than staying at home at Tunbridge Wells

The Christmas Spirit

A Spinster Takes a Chance with a Gentleman

By Celia Dale

Illustrations by Doria Nachshen

It was really a very pleasant little party, thought Miss Willow, as she sat knitting by the be-paperchained fireside. There was her sister Minnie in the chair opposite, plump and placid and just a little foolish—for look at the way she used to give in to Edward when he was alive, and how credulous she was; and then there was Marjorie, Minnie's daughter, who was sitting on the floor in the firelight, roasting chestnuts and saying "Damn!" when they scorched her fingers—Miss Willow pursed her lips each time she said it. Then there was Clive, lounging back in the basket-chair and trying to look manly into an enormous, smelly pipe — Miss Willow sniffed and reflected yet again what messy creatures men were. And Jeremy, who, Miss Willow supposed, was Marjorie's young man—certainly she hoped so, for the number of "Darlings" and "Poppets" that flew between them would have been enough to compromise any young girl in Miss Willow's youth.

Yes, thought Miss Willow, it was a very pleasant party, and a very much nicer way of spending Christmas than staying at home in Tunbridge Wells. Although she believed in keeping herself to herself, although her independent spirit led her to prefer to live alone in two rooms rather than in this pleasant suburban house with Minnie and the children, although she regarded young people with a good deal of suspicion, "I must confess," she thought, the ideas clicking in her grey head as sharply as the knitting needles in her elderly fingers, "I must confess that at Christmastide it is perhaps more suitable to be with one's kith and kin."

A sudden scurry of rain beat against the windows, and the door rattled complainingly in the shadows. Minnie shivered. "What a dreadful night!" she said. "Rain on Christmas Eve, when it ought to be snow."

"Why ought it to be snow?" asked Jeremy argumentatively. "Snow is just an outworn convention."

Minnie looked dashed. Miss Willow paused in her knitting and looked at him sternly from behind spectacles that glazed in the firelight. "If it were not for conventions," she said, "the world would be in a state of chaos."

"It is in a state of chaos," said Clive cheerfully.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Willow, resuming her knitting. "Not with my dividends paying their way, and all of us sitting here peacefully."

Again the rain beat on the windows, and Marjorie said: "To-night is a perfectly ideal night for a murder or a ghost or something really flesh-creeping—a horrible, shrieking, gibbering Thing which will float into mother's room at midnight——"

Minnie gave a little scream. "Oh, don't, dear, don't! You know how nervous I am."

Miss Willow stopped knitting once more. An elder sister's affectionate contempt tinged her voice as she demanded: "You don't really mean that you believe in such nonsense?"

Minnie hesitated. "Well," she said defensively, "funny things do happen."

"Rubbish!"

"No, it isn't. People write whole books about them—about shapeless forms and funny smells and noises—and once I read a most horrible story about a malignant head that used to float about

on a staircase." Miss Willow snorted.

"Don't you believe in ghosts, then, Auntie?" asked Clive lazily.

"I certainly do not."

"Not even on a night like this?"

"Certainly not. There are no such things, dear boy."

That was one of the things about Agnes, thought Minnie: she was so certain of everything, and always had been, right from a child. What a pity she had never married and settled down—and a slight, sentimental sigh trembled her cushioned bosom as she put away her darning and announced it was time for bed.

AVERTING her eyes from the spectacle of her niece receiving a hearty good-night kiss from Jeremy, Miss Willow followed. As she mounted the stairs behind Minnie's laborious hips she pondered the difference between nowadays and her own youth. Young people took a little getting used to, and she could not really approve; but they were dear children, and a comfort to poor Minnie.

"Now, have you got all you want?" said Minnie as they reached the landing. "I do hope you'll be comfortable. Good-night, dear."

"Good-night, Minnie." They kissed each other affectionately, and Miss Willow shut herself into her room.

It was a rather bare, bright room of medium size, furnished, like most spare rooms, with things nobody else wanted. There was a vinegary oak wardrobe and a washstand with a marble top, and a huge brass double bedstead with a pink frill round the bottom. On the wallpaper birds with long, ornamental tails flitted in and out of trellises, and two green and red Turkish mats spread their inadequate length over the green linoleum.

But to Miss Willow it was pleasant enough. As she undressed and padded about in her nocturnal preparations she thought about many things—Minnie and her simplicity, and whether she would like the bed-jacket which Miss Willow had knitted her; Marjorie and her young man; how she was to avoid meeting him or Clive on her way to the bathroom next morning, which would be very embarrassing; and thence to the disadvantages of having a man in the house at all. Memories of her father, the Canon, came to her, the hush that had greeted his words, the awe that even his empty chair had evoked. One was certainly very much more free in two rooms at Tunbridge Wells; and if there was anything of wistfulness in Miss Willow's thoughts as she washed her face and dried it vigorously, she did not recognise it.

But when she emerged from the towel she saw a man lying in her bed.

It was all over in a moment. She had time to notice that he wore a linen nightshirt, that he lay on his back with his hands clasped on his stomach, leaning against the pillows. He had a good deal of curling grey hair and luxuriant grey whiskers, a round, red face, a full red mouth, and eyes that regarded her with an expression of roguish appraisal. As she looked, he smiled, and slowly, very slowly, he winked at her.

And then there was no one there.

Fear, horror, indignation, amazement fled through Miss Willow's mind. Her impulse was to scream very loudly and rush out on to the landing; conflict of emotion numbed her, so that she stood silent, gaping at the empty bed.

For empty it certainly was. Where the bedclothes had lifted over a manly paunch they now lay smooth; not a wrinkle marred the virgin roundness of the pillow.

Miss Willow gave a gasp and reached for her spectacles. But even with these she could see nothing more. Then the appreciation of that slow wink came to her, and she remembered her attire. Flinging her dressing-gown about her, she advanced indignantly to the bed.

But there was no one there.

Miss Willow threw back the bedclothes; she looked behind the pillows and under the bed; she even opened the wardrobe door and inhaled the odour of old lavender and camphor, which was all it held.

But there was still no one there.

"Good gracious!" she muttered, hugging her dressing-gown about her and standing irresolutely in the middle of the room. Then "What rubbish!" she said more firmly, and gave herself a little shake. An optical illusion, brought on by all that ridiculous talk downstairs; she would see her oculist when she returned to Tunbridge Wells. Or perhaps it was her liver. Really, at her age, to go imagining things! . . . Thank goodness she had not rushed out of the room and made herself a laughing-stock. She set her jaws firmly and banished the apparition from her mind.

NEVERTHELESS, she moved about a little warily, completing her toilet in a rather sheepish way under the shelter of her dressing-gown. It was really very ridiculous; she was over-tired: she would dismiss it from her mind. Resolutely she brushed her grey hair and plaited it into a stiff pigtail; then, in her dressing-gown, she sat down boldly on the edge of the bed and tied coloured labels with tinsel string on to the pink tissue-paper parcels for the family to-morrow morning. When, that done, she rose and

. . . absently allowing herself to be kissed under the mistletoe by Jeremy

turned to plump up the pillows, the Gentleman was lying there, smiling.

He inclined his head pleasantly. "Good-evening, madam," he said.

Miss Willow was speechless.

"I trust you will pardon this somewhat informal method of introduction. I—er——" he looked at her coyly, "I forbore to knock."

"Who are you?" gasped Miss Willow.

"Ah! Now you have me," replied the Gentleman. "I *am* no one. I *was* a Mr. Hector Budbury. I go with this bed."

"How dare you come into my room like this!" said Miss Willow, recovering a little of her self-possession.

The Gentleman spread his hands apologetically. "Alas, madam, necessity. I assure you it was my invariable custom to knock upon a lady's door before—hum—entering. But now . . ." He sighed.

Miss Willow clasped her dressing-gown about her neck so tightly that it almost choked her. "You will leave this room at once, sir!" she said.

"That, madam, I regret I cannot do."

"I shall call my nephew. I shall call the police."

"Ah, but I fear it would be useless. You see, I should just disappear—like this." And before her indignant eyes the Gentleman slowly dissolved.

Miss Willow stared round her wildly, then made for the door. As she reached it the Gentleman's voice came floating down from the ceiling. "Madam, I implore you to be circumspect. What will be thought if you summon the household to survey an empty bed? Worse still, what would be thought, were they to find me—hum—in it?"

"Oh!" Miss Willow sat down suddenly on a chair. She felt faint; she must be mad, she must be dreaming. She shut her eyes tightly and tried to regain her reason.

When she reopened them the Gentleman was once more in the bed. There was a slight pause.

"You must forgive me if I cause you inconvenience," he said presently. "Believe me, I appreciate how you must feel. But, you see, I cannot help myself. I could not leave—even if I were so ungallant as to wish to," and he bowed a little over the bed-clothes.

"But you can't stay here!" cried Miss Willow.

"Alas, madam, I have no choice."

Miss Willow stared at him for a moment. Then, quite suddenly, she began to cry, very quietly, wiping her eyes on the corner of her dressing-gown. She had not cried for many, many years, and as though aware of this the Gentleman sat up, genuinely concerned. "Madam, I beg you—don't distress yourself. No one regrets this intrusion more than myself. Please, please do not alarm yourself."

In a small voice, watery with tears, Miss Willow answered: "I've never—in all my life—been in such a position. I've always — always been so — so modest."

"You still are. Indeed, indeed, dear madam, far be it from me to make you otherwise. But, as I said, I have no choice."

"What do you mean?"

He sank back on the pillows and waved a hand. "This is my Haunt," he said. "I am obliged—for reasons I need not go into now—to return to this bed, wherever it may be, for two nights every year: Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Ah, madam, imagine it—I, who loved gaiety so much, to be condemned to spend the gayest season of the year in a spare bedroom! Far from company, with no one to talk to, no one to watch . . . But there, I suppose it serves me right." He sighed, and picked moodily at the counterpane.

"But what am I to do?" said Miss Willow weakly.

"Is there no other room?" She shook her head. "You see, I can only appear if I 'm in bed; and it 's so much more comfortable to appear. I suppose—you wouldn't care to share it with me?"

"Sir!"

He stared at her wistfully. "It 's not because you 're afraid of me, is it?"

Miss Willow drew herself up. "I am certainly not. I do not . . ." her voice faltered a little, but she went on, "I do not believe in you."

The Gentleman's face brightened. "Well, in that case," he said, "I don't see why you shouldn't get into bed. If you don't believe in me you can pretend I 'm not here, can't you?"

"No, I cannot!"

"Well, I don't know what else to suggest," he said.

There was a long pause. The rain had stopped, and only a measured drop fell from some channel on to the window-sill. In the distance a bell struck one o'clock. Miss Willow sat huddled on the hard little chair, red-eyed and very cold. She was past thought. Presently she sneezed.

The Gentleman looked at her and sighed. "Very well," he said, "I 'll go. It means I shall have to shiver about the room until morning, but never mind. Come, madam." He sat up and began to dissolve again.

Miss Willow watched until there was nothing left. Then "Are you sure you 're not still there?" she asked uncertainly.

From the washstand his voice came sadly: "Quite, madam. I was a man of my word. I shall not trouble you."

Miss Willow advanced stiffly to the bed. It certainly seemed completely empty. But then, so did the room. Taking a breath, she got quickly in and clasped the covers closely about her neck.

"Shall I turn off the light?" came his voice.

"Oh—thank you."

The light went out and there was silence. Presently she heard a sigh. "No one regrets this more than I do," he said, and the cane-bottomed chair creaked coldly. "Good-night to you, madam."

"Good-night," she said. And after a little while she slept.

CHRISTMAS DAY passed in a daze for Miss Willow. She was nervous and abstracted, hardly seemed to notice the presents the others gave her, merely picked at her turkey, so that Minnie was quite alarmed. After tea, when friends came in for a party, her trance dropped from her a little; but at the back of her mind the Gentleman remained, incredible, bewildering.

He struck at the roots of Miss Willow's mind; for the first time she was uncertain and did not know what to do. If he were a real man . . . But he couldn't be; real men do not dissolve. She could not confide in Minnie, for who in their senses would believe her story? "I must be mad," she thought, absently allowing herself to be kissed under the mistletoe by Jeremy. "I must be mad." Yet she could not believe that she was. She could not believe—anything.

Supposing she were to ask to change to another room? Then one of the others would have to go through it, and they might be unkind to Mr. . . . She drew herself up with a jerk.

She could not ask to share Minnie's room, for ever since she was a child she had insisted on sleeping alone; it was one of her foibles.

Besides—and into her eyes came for an instant a gleam of her old spirit—she was not one to run away from—well, she supposed it must be nothing.

Bedtime grew closer. The last guests departed, the last hot milk was drunk by the fireside. As the family dawdled upstairs, nervousness and excitement

clashed so violently within Miss Willow's small and elderly person that she trembled.

"Look at you!" exclaimed Minnie. "Now, I insist on bringing you something hot when you're in bed, Agnes."

"No, no!" cried Miss Willow. She placed herself between Minnie and the bedroom door. "I'm perfectly all right—it's the excitement, the noise—nothing at all serious—don't worry, Minnie . . ."

"Well, I'm not happy about you, dear. If you're not better in the morning, I shall call the doctor."

"Very well, do—do . . ." agreed Miss Willow.

At last, clucking and fussing, Minnie went away. Miss Willow, peering cautiously round to make sure that no one was about, opened the door and slunk inside.

She advanced a little way into the room and looked about her. It seemed very cold, and very empty. She cleared her throat, and quickly, under her breath, as if she tried not to hear herself do it, she muttered: "Are—are you there?"

But there was not a sound. Shrouded beneath her dressing-gown she undressed and got quickly into bed. "Well," she thought, "it must have been a dream, after all."

She was wakened some time later by a tap on her shoulder, and peering over the sheet, was horrified to see the Gentleman sitting up in bed beside her. Although it was dark she could see him clearly, for he shone rather. He appeared to be greatly excited and was leaning towards her, his red face eager.

"Madam," he said, "I must speak to you——"

"Get out!" breathed Miss Willow hoarsely.

"Something of the greatest importance has just come to my knowledge," he said. "I implore you to listen to me."

"How dare you! How *dare* you . . . !"

He bounced up and down in a frenzy of impatience. "This is no time for petty quibbles, madam," he said. "If my presence embarrasses you, I'm sorry. But something of the greatest importance has just come to my knowledge—something that will change my whole destiny. I appeal to your good heart, madam—I appeal to your sympathy."

"Well," snapped Miss Willow, pulling the bedclothes up to her nose, "what is it?"

"I have just learned, madam, how I may be spared the necessity of returning to this miserable bed twice a year for the rest of eternity. How, to use a vulgar yet apposite expression, I may be 'laid.'"

"What do you mean?"

He sat back and looked at her solemnly. "I may go free for ever if I can persuade someone to share this bed with me for a whole night."

"Never!" cried Miss Willow, sitting up in a flurry. "Never!" She threw aside the bedclothes and got out. "Such a thing is quite impossible!"

THE Gentleman clasped his hands together in his lap and looked sadly down at them. "I feared you would take it amiss," he said. "I feared it. After all, why should I expect you to imagine what my existence in this bedroom has been year after year—what a bitter exile, what a misery, what a bondage? I was a man who loved his fellows; I loved wine and women and song. Always I had life about me, laughter and warmth and good cheer. Especially at Christmas. And now, madam, what is there? Emptiness, solitude. Year after year I've sat here these two nights, listening to the sounds of revelry downstairs, imagining the laughter, the port wine, the kisses. . . . Year after year I've floated round and round these undecorated walls, shedding tears—yes, tears, madam—to think that this must be my lot for the rest of eternity—bounded, unable to wander at will among the happiness of my fellows. Condemned to go on haunting a brass bedstead in a usually empty spare bedroom, divorced from my friends—bedbound!" His voice broke, and he buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, please . . ." said Miss Willow. He looked so pitiful she could hardly bear it.

"I don't say I didn't have my faults," continued the Gentleman wistfully. "We're none of us perfect. After my dear wife died . . . even so, I little thought this bedstead—but there, what's the use of remembering? I had hoped that you would help me. Not only because it is the season of good-will, madam, but because—because you have such a kind face. It would have meant so much to me." He hid his face again.

"But don't you see," she said, "it's quite impossible?"

"Why, madam, why? What harm could I do you? I'm not real ——"

"Never mind that," interrupted Miss Willow quickly.

"It means so much to me," he repeated.

"Don't ask me to do it—it wouldn't be right," she said, but she could not meet his eyes. There was a little pause.

"Very well," he said at last, "I won't urge you to go against your principles. After all, I have no right to ask favours. It's only . . ." and two large tears bloomed in his eyes and trickled slowly down his florid cheeks. "It's only that no one's been kind to me for years and years."

"Don't!" cried Miss Willow beseechingly. Deep in the prim, hard cocoon of her spirit something was struggling for release. In all her five-and-sixty years she had felt no pain like this.

"But you're getting cold," said the Gentleman. "Come back to bed, madam. I won't trouble you further, I give you my word."

Slowly he began to dissolve. Miss Willow took a step forward. "Where are you going?" she said.

He came back a little. "To the other side of the room," he answered. "I shall sit on a chair until morning." He began to fade again.

"Stop!" cried Miss Willow. "You mustn't—you mustn't go . . ."

He rushed back into sight, and the sudden brightness of his face almost dazzled her. "You mean you'll save me?"

She choked a little, took hold of the bedclothes, and nodded her grey head. "Yes," she said, "I—I'll save you."

She shut her eyes and scrambled in, burying her burning face in the pillow. She felt him draw his breath, heard his voice a little unsteady in her ear.

"From an eternity of loneliness," he whispered, "I thank you for having released me. You are a very good woman, madam."

The bedstead creaked and shook a little as he lay down beside her. And despite her fear, her confusion and her stifling shame, Miss Willow felt a wave of almost unearthly peace flood into her heart.

THE END.

Slowly he began to dissolve

A happy Christmas reflection

BRYLCREEM

THE PERFECT HAIR DRESSING

KEEPS YOUR HAIR IN PERFECT CONDITION

THE LARGE BOTTLE WITH A SPECIAL BRYLCREEM PUMP MAKES AN IDEAL CHRISTMAS GIFT . . .

The County Perfumery Co., London, N.W.10

The Christmas Present Problem

By Maurice Lane-Norcott

The late Charles Dickens then went on staring in the window

It is related of the late Charles Dickens, the creator of those famous characters, Scrooge, Drooge, Drage, etc., that one snowy December afternoon he was standing on the site of Harrods Stores, looking in the window of an old curiosity shop that was there in those days, when he was accosted by a beautiful young American girl, named Sadie Washington, who mistook him for Thackeray.

"The compliments of the season, Thackeray," said this beautiful young American girl, dropping a curtsey. "And what are *you* going to give the old folks for Christmas?"

Naturally, this unexpected question coming from an entire stranger very much surprised the late Charles Dickens. Drawing himself up to his full height, he replied with dignity: "The name, madam, is Dickens *not* Thackeray. As for the old folks, they have me decidedly puzzled, stap them!"

The late Charles Dickens then went on staring in the window of the old curiosity shop, leaving his pretty accoster no whit the wiser than she had been before.

Well, doubtless, this story, like all stories, is greatly exaggerated, and I only repeat it here because it makes a splendid opening for an article of this sort.

After all, what are any of us going to give the old folks for Christmas?

Shall we give them puddings and other delicacies for their "inner man"—which, in the case of our female relations, is obviously absurd—or shall we buy them some more practical gift, such as a lathe or a sack of loam for their window boxes?

Well, this is a question that needs very careful consideration, because so much depends on circumstances.

To a mother-in-law who lives in a bungalow

For example, some people who live at a great height from the ground—say, on the top floor of some tall building or tower—would consider an Otis lift to be a most acceptable Christmas gift.

"Why, how thoughtful of dear Henry!" they would say. "He has remembered my gout and sent me the loveliest little Otis lift!"

To a mother-in-law who lives in a bungalow, though, or an uncle who suffers from agraphobia, such a present, no matter how costly, would only come as a most unwelcome surprise. Probably she (or he) would be far more grateful for a Pomeranian dog or a bowl of goldfish.

Well, a good plan here is to make a note of all our friends and relations who live in bungalows, converted railway carriages, tents, upturned boats, etc., or who suffer from agraphobia. Then when we are preparing our Christmas shopping list, all we need do is write against their names: "No Otis lifts or moving staircases." In this way we shall save them many a bitter disappointment.

Indeed, I think I am safe in saying that the whole art of Christmas shopping lies in the careful elimination of unsuitable gifts.

Take, for example, a dainty little pantie girdle with detachable garters, made in a delightful shade of pale blue satin or Jacquard batiste. Well, would it not be ridiculous of us to send such a gift with our kindest regards to a Brigadier-General? Even if he could find a use for such an unsuitable present, it wouldn't, alas, be a good use.

And what applies to pantie girdles applies with equal force to electric razors, bowler hats, goal-posts, and boxing gloves. Only a nephew who took no thought at all for the future would send an electric razor or a bowler hat to his wealthy aunt.

Thus we see that that bugbear, Sex, which is always rearing its ugly head in the world to-day, rules our choice of Christmas presents, just as it rules our other so-called "choices," such as how we shall spend our money, or when we shall get divorced.

Well, don't say you haven't been warned.

At this point it may interest readers to learn of a system which I have invented for giving my friends and relations just the very presents they want without taking upon myself the onus of choosing them.

My plan is to send out prettily-designed Christmas Gift Vouchers worded as follows:

MR. MAURICE LANE-NORCOTT

Mr.
wishes Mrs. .....
Miss

a very jolly Christmas indeed, and authorises him/her to choose from Messrs. .....'s emporium a seasonable gift not exceeding in value £ s. d., and charge this to Mr. Lane-Norcott's account.

.....

Tear along the dotted line.

THIS HALF TO BE GIVEN UP BY THE RECIPIENT.

I declare that I have chosen a

.....

costing £ s. d., and I am delighted with it.

Signed .....

Witness .....

(Shop assistant to sign here.)

IMPORTANT!!!

Should Messrs. ..... refuse to book a Christmas gift, please try Messrs. .....

The main drawback to this plan, of course, is that all my friends and relations will know exactly how much their presents have cost. However, I am hoping to get over this difficulty by filling in the price in code, thus: "A seasonable gift not exceeding PT/XX."

Then, all that the holder of a Christmas Gift Voucher will have to do is to go to the counter and say: "Please show me some cases of champagne (or Pomeranian dogs) costing about PT/XX."

Of course, if it turns out that there aren't any cases of champagne (or Pomeranian dogs) to be had as cheaply as that—say, nothing under ZY/SS—then I don't know what voucher holders will do. Very likely they will have to pay the difference (TC/AA) themselves.

Still, that scarcely concerns the donor, I think. It is not the *value* of a gift that really matters. It is the kindly thought.

I WILL conclude this short treatise with a clever hint for using up those surplus pieces of cold Christmas pudding, which are so apt to become a nuisance at this festive season. Up till now it has been a strict family secret, but this year I am going to divulge it. It is my Christmas present to you all.

. . . with our kindest regards to the Brigadier-General

It seems that one Boxing Day my aunt, Mrs. Molesworthy, was out for a ramble across Putney Common with the poet, Swinburne, when suddenly he turned to her and said: "The hounds of Spring are on Winter's traces, Mrs. Molesworthy!"

"Are they?" said my aunt vaguely. "Why?"

"Well, I don't quite know yet," said Swinburne, shyly. "I've only just thought of the line."

"Well, skip it," said my aunt shortly. "I've something more important to think about now than hunting."

"You mean—er—us?" asked the poet, hopefully, for he always had a tender spot in his heart for my aunt.

"No, I *don't* mean us!" retorted my aunt, who was in no mood for dalliance just then. "I mean my household duties! Whatever can a woman do with a larder full of pieces of cold Christmas pudding?"

"H'm," said Swinburne, thoughtfully, rather puzzled by this unusual question. And then, after a moment's consideration, he added, tentatively: "Have you ever thought of making door-knockers?"

Well, even in her wildest dreams, it had never occurred to my aunt to make door-knockers.

. . . or a bowler hat to his wealthy aunt

However, when she got home she took a piece of cold pudding into the wood-shed and quickly knocked it into shape with a hammer and a chisel, afterwards giving it two thick coats of gold paint.

To her complete surprise it made a most acceptable Christmas gift. Indeed, so pleased was she with the result, that ever since then she has made a practice of giving door-knockers for Christmas. What is more, her friends give her door-knockers in return too. It is the ideal arrangement.

Well, that seems to be all or practically all that I have to say here about Christmas presents, unless any of you are thinking of giving me one as a surprise. In which case I will add: "Thank you. It is just the very thing that I need."

THE END.

. . . knocked it into shape with a hammer and chisel

"Miss Warren, please show the gentleman back to children's toys"

THE CHRISTMAS BOX

De Reszke

MINORS

Packed ready for Christmas posting

60 FOR 2/- PLAIN, CORK OR 'IVORY' TIPPED

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Mackintosh's 'Quality Street'

A delicious Assortment of Toffees & Chocolates

JOHN MACKINTOSH & SONS LTD., TOFFEE TOWN, HALIFAX, ENGLAND

Christmas on the Portalés

The Private Miracle of a Muleteer

By Peter Belloc

Illustrations by Barbosa

Standing at the foot of the ladder, José glared at the mountains

EARLY in the morning of December 24th, 1924, José Miravana, muleteer, stumbled sleepily down the outside staircase—or, to describe it more accurately, the ladder—which gave access from the ground to the first and only floor of the Posada de la Viuda de S. Calaveda in the mountain village of Caralps, which clings to (rather than stands upon) the mountain-side between San Juan de Ripoll and those snowbound heights which separate Cataluña from France and instil into the soul of man as nearly as possible the true conception of eternity.

To foreign eyes this building would have seemed to resemble a farm outhouse rather than a reasonably comfortable dwelling-house, supplying simply and without ostentation all that the weary bodies of hungry men and beasts of burden require.

Substantially built of stone, any English countryman would have mistaken this building for a granary. For it stood upon nine stout pillars of stone, each ten feet high, and the front door was approached by the peculiar manner of ascending this ladder, wide as an ordinary staircase, which stretched along the side of the house and gave access to a balcony of stout timbers which ran all round the house.

The windows were mere slits, such as those built by our ancestors for purposes of archery. They further resembled those of some ancient stronghold in so far as they revealed the immense thickness of the walls.

The space beneath the house was occupied by such a variety of farm beasts as would have made old Noah himself feel jealous.

Goats, pigs, sheep, cows, mules, hens, and even the house dog all sought shelter here from the deathly cold beyond. They bickered and stamped the night away, till it was a wonder that anyone could sleep immediately overhead.

Perhaps no one did, for it is a fact that as José Miravana descended to the ground he stretched, yawned, and muttered beneath his breath something remarkably like a curse.

The sun was not yet risen ; indeed, it was only just after dawn. Away in the midst of the sky, and straight before him, the morning star still burned, fighting a glorious rearguard action against the invading legions of the day. At that altitude and in the clear, frost-bound air, it shone so brightly, so near, that it seemed by stretching forth the hand it might be grasped, possessed for one's very own and given as a plaything to one's youngest child.

All these things passed through José's mind ; for being a man long accustomed to being alone in the company of silent things, his imagination was vivid and, being his only companion, it was his habit to let it play fancy with him during his long marches over the mountains.

He recited once the Angelus and asked the Virgin Mother of the Pine Trees, to whom he had more than the usual devotion of his countrymen, to protect himself and his mules and all dependent upon both throughout the day that was before him.

No bell sounded his Angelus ; complete silence held the frozen spaces of that upper world.

Then, in the best tradition of Spain, having prayed, he swore !

For it had snowed slightly during the night ; not enough to slacken the pace of his mules nor to disguise the small yet familiar objects by which he would find his way over the rugged and virtually trackless miles before him.

Ay, Dios !

He knew the way well enough, and his two mules, El Tio and La Barranca, knew it even better than he. That was not the trouble. If it had only snowed slightly it would certainly snow again—and snow heavily.

Living his whole life in the open, travelling plains and mountains alike, frequently traversing the whole of the Peninsula in the course of a year, had made José (and every other of his kind) into an infallible weather prophet.

Better than any barometer, with more genuine certitude than the whole gang of crazy meteorologists, José Miravana knew it would snow again—snow heavily—and he was pressed for time.

TO-MORROW would be La Natividad, and he would spend it at home with his wife—not in someone else's parish. He spent enough of his good life, Heaven knew, in other people's parishes during the rest of the year. But to-night of all nights he was for his own hearth.

His wife was expectant, and that was not the least of his excellent reasons.

He was making this early start on purpose to cover these last and most difficult kilometers which lay between him and his young wife, La Chica Maria. Now it was going to snow. Little wonder that he cursed !

Standing at the foot of the ladder,

The snow cut his face

José glared at the mountains above him, away across the ravine, with an expression which might well have been accompanied by a shaken fist or other gesture of defiance.

"Muleteers are fools; sons of muleteers are worse; grandsons of muleteers are only born in Castile," he muttered. "What a life is ours!"

So thinking, he entered the gloom of the stables, harnessed and loaded his two mules, and set forth for the wilderness he was condemned to cross.

The village of Caralps hangs only, as it were, by a permanent miracle to the rocky slopes of a ravine above a noisy, tumbling torrent. It can be seen for a considerable distance as a man follows the river upstream from San Juan de Ripoll.

The church seems to grow out of, and to be part of, the living rock which overhangs the ravine below. In the distance it beckons to a man and leads him on up the valley beyond and into the wilderness, till he himself becomes, and knows himself to have become, an integral part of that great mystery—the things which men call mountains—and a subject of Dalua reigning in misty sadness upon the peaks.

José Miravana was a subject of Dalua, dangerous god of the wilderness. When he swore in the courtyard of the Posada de la Viuda de S. Calaveda on the subject of muleteers, it was no vain oath. When he prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mother of the Pine Trees it was no vain prayer.

José was of Castilian blood, the son, the grandson, and the great-grandson of a muleteer. Almost before he could walk he had been over the Guadarrama with the mules. Before the parish priest had taught him to read and write (both of which arts he had all but forgotten) or his mother taught him to say his prayers (which he still remembered and to which he had greatly added through his imagination), he knew the great citadel of Segovia, its cathedral, and the trackless, burnt-up plains which lie beyond—Burgos and Valladolid.

When his grandfather died as the result of a knife wound from a man who had called him "gitano" (gipsy), José's father had taken the whole family into High Aragon to Jaca, whence he would journey as far as Pamplona by way of Tiermas and down the Gallego to Huesca and on to Zaragoza.

Here, holding a lighted candle, he had been presented by his father to Our Lady of the Pillar, on his fourteenth birthday, the Feast of the Purification. He looked upon the Ebro and believed it to be the widest and strongest river in the world.

But misfortune fell upon the family. His father got himself into trouble over the business of playing *contrabandista* on moonlit summer nights over the Somport. Coming down the slopes into Larañones one night, his leading mule, well laden with tobacco, matches, and English cloth, stumbled hoofs and ears into a *pareja* of Guardia Civil. Miravana *el viejo* disappeared for six long months, during which time José (Miravana *el joven*), his mother and his sisters, knew what it was to be hungry. When, in the late winter, Miravana *el viejo* returned from Zaragoza, bearded and thin, he announced his intention of quitting Jaca and going south to Andalucia.

THROUGH the hardest winter José ever remembered, the family trekked off to the south, and early summer found them again in a good way of business in Malaga.

It was here that he grew to manhood, and here that he had married La Chica Maria, after he had seen her leaning from a balcony as he wended through Cordova with his mules.

"God keep you for ever as you are to-day," he called from his seat on the haunches of the leading mule, where he was perched between two large skins of wine.

"I'd rather He did it than you," returned Maria with ready wit, but the next time they met they swore what Holy Church required.

It was the plague—the dreaded *peste*—which drove José and Maria from Malaga to Cataluña, and the early years were lean ones. It did not take José long to realise that railways and motor traffic were affecting the business of the muleteer. He lost money; he lost more money. At last he went up-country into the mountains.

Immediately he became more at home and began to prosper again, and became something of a picturesque philosopher, as we have found him.

José, while I have been engaged in telling you his story, has covered nearly half his journey. At the moment, sitting sideways on his leading mule, he is zigzagging up the steep, fir-clad slopes of the Portalés, singing in a remarkably high key a love song of his native Castile, composed of quarter notes and barbaric. His only accompaniment (by which you might have thought he had set the key) being the tinkling bells which adorn his mules.

José ceased singing as suddenly as he had begun. He cast a glance over his left shoulder and saw Caralps clinging to the opposite slopes of the ravine beneath and behind him. He had descended seven hundred feet into the valley, crossed the torrent by a very rough stone bridge, and climbed nearly a thousand feet up the opposite side of the valley. It was rough going with heavy-burdened beasts and only a professional muleteer could have done it.

Had he turned his head in the other direction, to the west, he would have been decidedly frightened. Although it was scarcely three o'clock in the afternoon the sun had gone a pale primrose yellow. Its lower rim was already sunk beneath a black, castellated bank of cloud extending unbroken from south to east of north.

At the same moment that he saw the approaching storm his beasts also scented danger. They stopped dead in their tracks, snorted columns of steam into the air, and shook their bony heads.

"Del-a-ante, Tio!" called José. This was no time for reverie, and even as he called the first large flakes began to fall upon him.

Puff by puff the wind rose as though someone were turning on a giant ventilating fan by stages. Each puff brought a higher velocity and maintained it. In a quarter of an hour the storm had become a blizzard. The fury of the wind literally shook his grip on the high Moorish saddle. The snow cut his face like a scalding thong. He lay as flat as he could along the beast's back and crouched behind the little protection offered by the lean neck. But escape was not possible. The more he sought protection the more brutally did the storm fiend find him out and lash at him and his.

Already it was pitch-dark, and his mules, floundering almost up to their bellies in snow, were keeping what best direction they could solely by animal instinct. As far as his confused and numbed faculties permitted him to judge, José calculated that they were working their way up the bare northerly scarp of the mountains. Still there was the saddle of the pass to reach; and even then the worst was yet before him. On the long descent the going would be easier, but the fury of the wind would drift the freezing snow into dunes yards and yards deep, and if they missed the saddle altogether in the darkness—*ay Dios!*

Heaven alone knew what was before them.

In the pitch darkness, sky and mountain were one and the same solid black. José strained his aching eyes into the darkness. Already he was frozen beyond sensibility beneath the knees and elbows. The pit of his stomach ached damnably, his head sang, and all his senses were wrapped in an overpowering sleepiness. He kept consciousness by will-power alone and his place on the mule's back by sheer determination and fear, which told him in loud and unmistakable tones that if he fell he would never move again.

Suddenly in this solid darkness he felt the straining of his mule ease and flatten out from the slope. Praise be to God! Here was the saddle at last. Like the slash of a knife, the full blast and fury of the tempest cut the breath out of his body. He was in a swirling maelstrom where snow was ripping out of the clouds above and swirled up like a whirlpool from the ground by the hurricane which he had to face.

"Mother God! Gentle Virgin of the Pine Trees, bring me safely home and I will lead a better life." But he only *thought* the words. Articulate prayer was not possible while this storm fiend thus rode the mountains.

It was his last conscious thought. He was terribly frozen and the delicious, insidious sleepiness that crept over him he was no longer able to resist. He drowsed and hung in the saddle only on account of the high back and front and the Moorish stirrups which fitted over his feet like shoes and gave him ample security.

He returned to consciousness—rather than say "awoke"—with a start which set his heart thumping like a pile-driver and temples throbbing with fever.

It had ceased snowing. Dawn was breaking in bars of gold and green ahead of him. Half a mile ahead he saw the smoke arising from his own village, and his heart was glad.

But who was that walking ahead of him, leading El Tio by the bridle-rein? By the Evangelists! It was Maria. Yet she seemed not to walk on the snow.

"Maria!" he tried to call, but no sound came; she did not move her head, neither did she answer.

Steadily she continued about ten paces ahead of him, her hands behind her back, holding the bridle-rein of El Tio.

What was Maria doing out here in the freezing dawn of Christmas morning?

Where had she met him? How did she know he was coming? His mind swam away from him again. In a state of complete collapse they reached home. Without a word he saw Maria lead the weary mules away to the stables as two neighbours carried him indoors to bed—and there upon the bed lay La Chica Maria sleeping, and beside her a newborn baby boy. José went into a faint.

Warm brandy and blankets saved his life. By afternoon he was sound as a bell. He went forth alone to the mountain-side. He was unsure of himself. Yes, there were the tracks of his mules, but not a vestige of a sign of human footsteps.

No; the men who had carried him in had seen no one. Maria?

They laughed at him over their drinks. Maria had borne him a son at the height of the blizzard last night.

But José shrugged his shoulders and said—nothing.

. . . in the church of Our Lady of the Pine Trees . . .

HAD you been with me in the church of Our Lady of the Pine Trees in Barcelona on February 2nd, 1925, you would have seen a man and his wife with a baby in her arms approach the Lady Altar. You would have seen the man lay at the foot of the altar a little doll—a boy in swaddling clothes, most beautifully stitched by hand.

Had you met him a month or more before in Caralps you would have known him to be José Miravana, muleteer.

THE END.

One Good Turn *(Continued from page 27)*

It stood on the top of the hill, four-square and beautiful, with vermilion pillars, an oval doorway, and marble floors. Through a network of intricate carvings Gordon MacLever peered, and saw the temple god, with glaring glass eyeballs, riding a preposterous steed.

Gordon MacLever stood grinning, tickled to death for a moment at the heathens and their rummy ways, though he would have enjoyed the joke better without all those ropes about him. And he did not altogether like the goings-on of the old Chinaman, who was evidently a high priest of some sort, for there he was, bowing and scraping, his hands tucked in his sleeves, embarked upon a long harangue or discourse to the inmate of that temple. It reminded Gordon MacLever not a little of his own father, lost in one of his more rambling and intricate perambulations to the Almighty in the kirk amongst the far hills of Loch Lochy.

When the prayer, or whatever it was, was over, Gordon MacLever summoned the elderly Chinaman to his side with a shout.

"Come away over here, you, and tell me what you mean by this treatment of a visitor."

"I am sorry. It is so ordained," said the old man, and drew in his breath thinly, sucking his teeth.

From the inner recesses of the temple he produced a collection of wooden slats strung together, covered with golden writing. One of their holy books, Gordon MacLever supposed, and he watched the grey figure climbing that crimson and golden stair.

"Yes, sir. It is here written—'Red is his hair as the sun at morning. . . . His blood shall be poured out freely. . . . Then shall prosperity return to a stricken land, and the years shall be very fat . . .'"

Gordon MacLever had a cold feeling down his spine. For the first time since the disaster he felt he might have been better off in the rice firm in Strand Road. For the first time he suspected good boys who obey their fathers are spared much, even if they miss a lot.

All hopes of rescue were in vain. No one knew where he was. He had taken great care they shouldn't. If it came to that, he didn't know where he was himself. In any case, in those days he was not the sort of person an Empire was likely to make a great hey-tutt-mutt at losing.

He took another look at the idol, all eyeballs and belly in the gathering dusk. There was now a great coming and going about the garden. Sinister preparations Gordon MacLever preferred not to watch began to take place. There was, in particular, a large cauldron of smoking crude oil he didn't care about at all. The air hummed now, like a hive of roused bees. Great orange lanterns were lit about the mandarin's garden.

"Here, you! You speak English. You must have travelled and learnt something, in spite of your goat's beard. Are you going to stand for a lot of nonsense the like of this?"

The mandarin was polite, even sympathetic.

"It is difficult, sir. As for me, I do not personally hold with sacrifices and oblations. But it is needful, for the peace of my city, that I uphold the ancient customs. The thing that is expedient, not that which is wise, that is what a man must do. For so long have they prayed and waited for a man with sun-coloured hair to die for the people and bring prosperity. Did I now not comply, and bind you when they run to me calling, 'Lo, he is come!' . . . did I not comply, then I myself might easily become the sacrifice."

His face broke into a network of wrinkles at this good joke.

He added, apologetically: "My people are an ignorant and unenlightened people. They are as children, easily frightened, easily pleased."

Gordon MacLever said ruefully: "They 'll be all that."

INDEED, the scene was now wild and macabre beyond any nightmare he had ever had after Hogmanay. Everywhere were flat yellow faces, expressionless save the eyes, which flared like cat's eyes caught by a lantern at night-time. There were strange night-flowering blossoms, too, that suddenly opened their petals drenching the cool darkness with their thick, sweet scent. About the lanterns that danced and bobbed in the little breeze, great dragon-flies and little bats and moths whirred and danced, as if they also were roused to a frenzy of joy at the coming orgy.

The soft laughter of women reached Gordon's ears from afar. He stirred, turning in his bonds. Now if only he could get hold of the women they 'd have pity on him. They 'd do something about it. The only one he could see he didn't fancy. She stood beside the cauldron of crude oil, stirring it gently. Her face was white, iridescent like a moonstone in the darkness. Her eyes were demurely cast down.

"It is my daughter. Her name means 'Miss Mimosa,'" said the mandarin in answer to his question.

"She 's a grand bonnie lassie," said Gordon MacLever, but he said it without conviction. He had little hope of her. He put his whole soul into a wordless prayer.

"Mimosa . . . for the love of the Lord look at me! Do something about it. A grand, fine, upstanding man the like of me to die for a lot of jumbodoodling the like of this."

If she got his message, she gave no sign of it. She went on with her sinister job, her eyes cast down.

Then the mandarin took a bieber, or Chinese guitar. With his long nail he plucked at the string till a humming arose. And the air was alive with the humming. It crept through Gordon's bones. It tickled his spine. And the mandarin transferred his long nail to another string, and the tune changed to plaintive, and then he strummed on two strings, and it was plaintive and maddening all at once. Though he had never heard this music before, Gordon knew well enough instinctively what it meant. The mandarin was summoning the god to the sacrifice.

When it died away, the sea of yellow faces surged nearer. Eager hands seized Gordon MacLever and loosed his ropes. Then he straightened himself, an idea suddenly coming to him.

"I claim a last request."

The mandarin translated this to the crowd and there was a short parley. Obviously the suggestion met with opposition. In the end the ayes had it. The mandarin said: "Speak on."

"Bring me ma wee black trunk," said Gordon. "You 've invoked your

"Noël!"

(Continued on page 72)

This England . . .

Stour Valley, Durweston—Dorset

THE village imposes a stricter discipline than does the town; though you dislike your neighbour you cannot escape him, and so our healthy tolerance is born. There is indeed but one man that is not tolerated for long in a community of Englishmen, and that is the bad craftsman. For the thing well-made is England's pride, and the instinct for it is sure in each one of us—whether for the ship well-built or the barrel well-brewed. As for that last, you have but to taste your Worthington to know within yourself that this—this is born of an ancient craft, brewed as handsomely in this year of grace as ever in "the good old days."

ISSUED BY WORTHINGTON AND CO. LTD., BURTON-ON-TRENT, ENGLAND

One Good Turn *(Continued from page 70)*

gods—by heck, I 'll now have a shot at mine ! "

He fitted together with trembling fingers one of the most complicated musical instruments ever invented by the ingenious mind of man.

The circle about him widened appreciably as he filled up the wind-bag. There was an anxious moan, premonition of worse to come, as he sorted his drones.

Then boldly, a great touselled Scot, he began to march up and down in the national manner. With every turn he took he found he had more room than the turn before. With the eerie wailing and moaning of one out of practice, he broke into a gay Strathspey. His fingers occasionally missing a note only increased the effect with sudden awful discordant moans and shrieks.

No music like it in the world, thought Gordon, warming to it. It was a pleasure to teach the heathen what could be done. He let himself go to the rollicking tune of " Kate Dalrymple." Hey nonney, ho nonney, high higgy ho higgy tum titty tum titty Kate Dalrymple ! It reminded him of his youth, and many a harvest dancing in the barns. He executed a few steps, carried away. Ah, those were the days ! He forgot the orange lanterns, the yellow faces. He forgot Alexander Monteith Paterson, the cause of all the trouble. He forgot the night-flowering blossoms with their thick, sweet scent.

He was back on his native moors, the heather out, the grouse calling. . . . He was Gordon, the lad from Loch Lochy, a one for the girls.

The wailing music changed to a lament—

Mown down like a flower
The Chief of Ardgour.
The hearts of the clansmen
Are weary with woe . . .

Mown down like a flower ! That brought him back to the present with a jerk. Sentiment flooded his heart, and homesickness and longing. It was the night before Christmas, and what a life ! What a life ! The music died away in a series of screams and groans and escaping air.

He stared about him, as if awaking from a trance. He was entirely alone. The orange lanterns swung gently in the garden. The great god glowered through the intricate carvings on the screen—all glassy eyeball and shining belly.

But there wasn't another soul in sight.

Then Gordon MacLever felt his manhood return with a rush.

He took a run at the pot of oil and lifted it into the night as if he was taking a penalty kick. And all the other sinister preparations he had watched with apprehension he hurled after it—knives and spears and choppers, and the whole dang lot of them.

Then he sat down in the big carved chair beside the temple to wait.

The mandarin himself returned at dawn. The sky was beginning to be streaked with primrose and pink—and a white mist went creeping over the rice-fields. Up the winding path he crept, humbly, the gold button shining on his hat.

" Where 's everybody ? " asked Gordon MacLever.

" They are frightened — they have run away."

He touched the empty bagpipes that lay on the marble floor, gingerly, deferentially, with long, thin, grey fingers.

" Ye 're no' frightened yourself ? " asked Gordon MacLever, regretfully.

" I have heard it before. It is a strong magic. You can teach it to me ? It requires much wind ? "

" Man, it 's easy as pie." He saw a way of escape. He saw freedom ahead, at least from death by sacrifice.

" It gives me much power. I shall tell them there is a devil inside the bag, that only speaks to you and me. I shall tell them it brings to our land news of prosperity. My people are an unenlightened and childish people. By this means we shall calm them and do them good."

Out of the darkness crept Miss Mimosa, and laid her forehead on his feet.

Then Gordon MacLever knew his wordless appeal had not gone unheeded. He patted her shoulder graciously. Dang the girl ! He didn't need her help now.

THEY gave him a little wooden house, all carved birds and flowers, and a blue robe, and a wide straw hat to keep off

(Concluded on page 74)

" Christmas invariably upsets Gibble a little, General "

THE DUAL BURBERRY

The Dual Burberry keeps out bitter cold winds better than leather coats do because although it is quite as warming it is a comforting warmth and never makes one hot, as leather is apt to do.

The Dual Burberry is the perfect weatherproof—superior to oilskin or mackintosh—Burberrys have supplied great numbers without receiving a complaint.

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The Dual Burberry, of great advantage to travellers, can be changed from overcoat to weatherproof, in appearance and in effect. Pull the sleeves inside out and the reversal is made.

The Dual Burberry is very light in weight.

The Dual Burberry ventilates naturally, the same as an unproofed coat.

If, "dear reader," you wish to make yourself or others a Xmas present, nothing will please so well as a Dual Burberry.

BURBERRYS LTD

HAYMARKET, LONDON, S.W.1

One Good Turn *(Continued from page 72)*

the sun. Daily the mandarin sat there, wringing painful noises from the bagpipes. Daily Miss Mimosa crept up when he had gone to sit at Gordon's feet, gazing into the face of this new god.

What was there to do all the long day, all the endless scented evenings, but make idle and harmless love? But he didn't encourage her to come up to his house. He preferred to meet her in the jungle away outside the stockade. He had a feeling if the mandarin caught them canoodling he might do something hasty with a scimitar before Gordon had time to sort his drones.

He flattered himself he did them a bit of good, too, though he was no missionary. When a question arose for settlement he always managed to get a satisfactory message from the gods, *via* the spirit in the bag. By this means he had them persuaded against human sacrifice. The god sent a polite message saying he was well satisfied with one small pig, and had no thirst for the villagers' superfluous girl children. And he got a very strong message one evening that nearly burst the bag when there was a chance of an old body being burned alive for setting a spell on a field.

They let her go in peace and another porker went wailing to its doom instead. The old woman crept up to Gordon MacLever's house, where she cleaned and did for him and prayed to his shadow.

But what a life! What a life! And where was there any way out of it? Walking through the sandy dust to the jungle with Miss Mimosa, Gordon MacLever could see no hope anywhere. If he escaped, what could he escape to? It was a whole year since he came to the village behind the stockade. They would long since have abandoned him as dead. The rice firm in Rangoon would hardly greet him with open arms if he turned up there now.

He noticed casually that Miss Mimosa had brought a brass pot with her, but he did not wonder why. The girl bored him terribly, she was so fulsome. She drew him away from the path they usually took to a sandy clearing. He wasn't interested even then. He saw her kneel and fill her pot. It was only when he realised she hadn't brought back water that he began to wonder.

The pot was full of crude oil.

It came in a bubbling jet out of the earth at his feet. There were other jets bubbling away all round him. Farther on, beyond a strip of rock, there was a veritable small geyser surrounded by a mushy sea.

Gordon MacLever slapped his thigh. He stood, hands on hips, and began to laugh.

He laughed and laughed. His basket-hat fell off into the oily morass.

Miss Mimosa was a genial and happy soul. She was delighted to see him so happy. She laughed, too.

HE had treated them all fair enough. He had nothing to reproach himself with. Indeed, in all his sojourn there he had done them only good, not harm. Not every pioneer can say the same. His bagpipes, certainly, were raised to a great glory, deified along with the glassy-eyed god in the temple. The mandarin, fairly proficient at last, got a suitable and convenient answer from them to any knotty question that arose.

A forest of derricks grew up about the village. There were houses and waterways and jetties there now. The mandarin had water laid on to his garden. It played for him in intricate fountains. he had electric light . . . Miss Mimosa had a motor-car. She had a whole box of glass beads. She had an umbrella of black silk and European boots. Her dowry had given her the pick of the eligible young men in the neighbourhood.

Prosperity had come to them all right. And it had come, just as their holy book said it would, through a man with red hair. Funny things, those holy books. You can't get away from them.

Twenty-five years ago . . .

LORD MACLEVER straightened himself in his chair. It was a queer enough tale, and it had a queer enough beginning, too. Alexander Monteith Paterson, with his long snout. One Scotsman is worth ten Englishmen.

He looked across at the young man from the *Daily Crier*.

The young man slept. His face had a lean and fallen-in look. He wasn't a good colour. He looked half-starved, poor laddie! England would never raise the brawny men that Scotland did till porridge became a national diet.

"I say, sir—I 'm dreadfully sorry . . ."

The young man from the *Daily Crier* sprang, embarrassed, to his feet. He was covered with confusion.

"What must you think of me? But I 've been having bad nights of late—a lot of worry. My wife is having her first baby. Can't think what possessed me to drop off like that . . ."

"Man, man, dinna distress yourself," said Lord MacLever. "Tell me, what did you say was your name, for I didna' catch it."

The young man laid his card on the table. It was the wrong sort of printing, on the wrong sort of card.

"Alexander Monteith Paterson," it said, "The Neuk, Little Tottingly, Herts."

There was a silence in the warm library. Then Lord MacLever said: "So he didn't die!"

The young man's face lit, flattered.

"Then you 've heard the story, sir? You knew of my father? He was set upon by poachers, having a holiday in Scotland. There were ten of them at least. He was badly hurt, but they pulled him through——"

"Ten of them at least," said his Lordship. "Fancy that. Aye, I 've heard the tale. And he 's still alive? Well, well!"

He pulled his cheque-book out of a drawer.

"Truth is a deal stranger than fiction, but being a journalist you 'll realise it 's not nearly as useful. So I 'll say no more. But you can tell that long-snouted father of yours you had this from me because one good turn deserves another, no matter what like it looks in the beginning. Good-day to you."

The young man from the *Daily Crier* steadied himself against the door-post. He wasn't sure he felt very well. He wasn't sure he wasn't going to be sick. The wind went walloping down Park Lane laden with a scurry of snow. The policeman had gone to tea, so the cornet-player had turned on his tracks—

Joyful all ye nations ri-hise,
Join the triumph of the ski-hies . . .

he wheedled.

The silk dressing-gown, blue-lined with rose. . . . A bassinet, all frills and silken bows. . . . Marna's white face, crowned with a crown of stars—they swum in disconcerting fashion before the young man's eyes.

In his hand was a cheque.

It was for one thousand pounds.

THE END.

"I'm afraid I didn't look whether it said 'indoor' or 'outdoor'"

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Games After Plum-Pudding

Substitutes for the Lost Art of Conversation

By Eveleigh Leith

YOU want to play something? All right; so you shall. But not, of course, anything very new. Stupefied with Yule as we are, that would be expecting too much of any of us. Besides, no new games are good games unless they come from America, and then, like "Monopoly," they are maddeningly complicated, or, like "Mr. and Mrs. Peabody," they need cards and the gambling spirit. Busy satirical American brains don't evolve the simple kind of game that suits the English family heavy with turkey and plum-pudding.

A simple request before we begin: that you will not, I hope, cheat. A curious moral hiatus in the make-up of otherwise upright Christians is revealed by the fact that no one is ever honest playing party games, except the proud, lonely souls who really want to win. And how *they* resent the peeping, cribbing, peccadilloes of their kith and cousins . . .

STARTING, as tradition bids, with pencils and paper, but utterly avoiding "Consequences," the silliest game ever invented, we 'll play "Stories." It 's very old, but very easy, non-competitive, and if you are feeling mellow enough, it 'll make you laugh. You don't *have* to be vulgar, either.

You each start writing some kind of an anecdote; after a line or two you turn back your paper so that only a few words are left showing, all the papers are passed round one place, and you go on with the story that 's been handed you, in whatever way the visible words inspire you. Turn the paper back, leaving a few words showing as before, and hand the sagas on. When the papers are all filled up, you each read one out.

No cheating in this game—looking back on what 's been written before—on pain of death.

Leave helpful things showing, so that your neighbour has a good idea of how to go on with the tale.

Here is a prim little composition as example. (The words in italics are the ones left showing each time)—

"The man had just taken his latchkey out to open the door when he heard a loud grating noise *that made his* morning cup of tea taste much better than usual. Milk like that *wasn't supplied by* the plumbers who fitted the bath; they said that they didn't deal in bathmats, but *they promised to* look after his kitten for him while he was away *and give it* to the postman for his corns which caused him a lot of trouble when he walked his round.

IF you fancy yourselves as poets and are tired of writing limericks, you can experiment with "Rhyming Answers."

Decide on a short question ("Was the train late?"; "Who killed Cock Robin?"), and choose a noun, as irrelevant as you please. Then you each write a verse or verses (four lines minimum) answering the question and introducing the chosen noun.

Like this — Question: "Why are spiders?" Noun: "Pincushion."

You ask me gentle stranger,
why are spiders?
Away, away! Don't tease
me with your riders.
Under the pincushion in
my room
You 'll find sad traces of a
spider's doom.

Or this:

Spider, spider, there you
crawl
Along the picture rail;
So sinister, so suave, so
small,
So delicate and frail;
And yet the bravest man
and tall
At sight of you will quail.

What bedroom weapons can
withstand
Your horrible attack?
A pincushion I take in hand,
To throw it at you, smack!
But feel I 'm sure to miss you and
I sadly put it back.

And then the toothglass I espy;
I seize it; on a chair
I climb; before you 've time to fly
I clap it o'er you. There!
You 're caught at last, and, shaking, I
Go staggering out for air.

AFTER poetry, art. There are a dozen versions of the drawing-consequences type of game, most of them only amusing when real artists play them. But for this one, the worse you draw the better.

You each make a picture of some incident (narrow it to historical or Biblical if you like), pass the drawings on, and each give a name or description to the picture you get given you, turn the papers back so that the drawings are hidden but the titles show, hand everything on, and draw a picture to match the title. Repeat, as the knitting books say, until the papers are all filled up. Then there 's nothing to do but look at the results and trace how Earl Baldwin buying a new pipe turned into a ski-er's nightmare.

WE might try an amusing drawing team-game that you probably don't know. We need a minimum of three players a side, and an umpire, some sheets of brown paper and some chalks, or large sheets of white paper and some soft-leaded pencils.

Each team must group themselves round a supply of paper and pencils in a different part of the room. The umpire makes a list of suitable drawing subjects (e.g., scissors, a lobster, caviare, braces, a man in a rowing-boat), and write each subject on a slip of paper.

One member of each team goes up to the umpire, and they are given a subject by being shown simultaneously a slip of paper. They go back to their teams and make a lightning sketch of the subject given (no letters or numbers may be used), and their mates have to guess what they are drawing. They may make as many sketches as they like, but may not speak a word until their team has guessed right.

The first team to guess what the artist is drawing wins a point.

Another member of each team then goes up

(Concluded on page 80)

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NEW SHELL LUBRICATING OIL

Games After Plum-Pudding

(Continued from page 78)

for a subject to draw for his side to guess. And so on, until each member has had, say, two turns at drawing.

FINALLY, there 's always "Lists," the classic of writing games. You make a list of a dozen subjects, choose a letter, give yourselves ten minutes, and each write three examples, beginning with the chosen letter, of each subject.

For scoring—three marks for any exclusive example, one mark for an example shared with anyone else. For settling wrangles, whether something or other counts or not—majority vote.

THE talking version of "Lists" is the one James Thurber immortalised —"Oral Categories."

Somebody gives a letter and a subject, and whoever shouts his example first wins a point, and then he gives a letter and a subject.

Better still, let the winner of a point set the subject and have an umpire to give the letter. The umpire is useful (but may lose his friends) in settling disputes (inevitable) about who said it first, and was that fair ?

THERE is, for another talking game, a new version of the old memory-teaser: "I went to the store and I bought . . ." It 's not such hard work as the original, and has a laugh or two in it.

One of you starts and says, for example: "I went to the store and I bought a toothbrush," at the same time making a teeth-cleaning gesture. The next player says: "I went to the store and I bought a "—here he makes the teeth-cleaning gesture—" and a piano," and he plays a mock piano. Player number three says the introductory phrase, "I went to the store and I bought a "—acts the toothbrush and piano, and adds a purchase of his own with a gesture to match.

And so on, each of you reciting the complete list in dumb show, saying "and a" between each pantomimic movement, and adding something new, giving the word and gesture together.

When anyone makes a mistake or gets hopelessly stuck, he drops out. Or you can allow yourselves two lives each if you like.

QUITE a reasonable little guessing game is "Associations." We send someone out of the room, and think of a person who must be historically, publicly, or personally known to all of us.

When our victim comes in, we tell him the sex of our chosen person, and he tries to discover who it is by asking what kind of flower, animal, sport, profession, period of history, material, etc., the person reminds us of, or that we would associate him with.

Questions must be put so that the answer is a noun or phrase, and not "yes" or "no," which are forbidden. You needn't answer literally, but must be truthful, and not intentionally misleading.

YOU know the spelling game where someone gives a letter of the alphabet and a word is built up by each player in turn adding a letter, until some ninny loses one of his three lives by adding one that completes a word ?

The old warhorse is much improved by players being permitted to build the word backwards or forwards, each player indicating where his letter is to go by saying "A before," "Z after." E.g., one player says "L," the next says "A after" (LA), the next "B before" (BLA), and so on.

This brings in the whole range of prefixes—un-, non-, re-, etc.—as ways of getting out of tight corners. And compound words like "backsliding," "underfoot," are ingenious life-savers.

Don't forget you may challenge the player immediately before you if you think he hasn't got a real word in his mind. He loses a life if he hasn't, you lose one if he has.

IF you have a grudge against anyone, suggest that they can't say forty words beginning with the same letter in sixty seconds, and see how tongue-tied they get.

NOW, you may or may not like ruining your evening dress or dinner-jacket by crawling about the floor, but if we can find some paper doyleys and enough newspapers for each player to fold one up into a sort of bat, we might try a home-made race game.

We mark out a start and a finish at opposite ends of the room, and *you* (the judge is already self-appointed) all line up at the start, each with a doyley on the floor in front of you, and a newspaper bat in your hand.

On the word "Go!" you try to drive your doyley horse across the floor to the finish by smacking the ground behind it with your bat, so that the horse hops forward in the breeze. Not as easy as you think.

ANOTHER floor game needs a balloon and two teams of at least three players a side.

Each team sits on the floor in a line opposite the other team, feet to feet, and tries to hit the balloon on to the floor beyond the backs of the opposition. Only the floor directly behind their backs counts as a goal.

You may lie down on your back to make a "save" but your feet must always touch the feet of your opposite number in the other team.

THERE is also this absurd team race with the outsides of two medium-sized matchboxes.

The first member of each team fits a matchbox case on to his nose, and on the word "Go" passes it from his nose to the nose of the next member of his team without either of them touching it with his hands. The matchbox must be thus raced from nose to nose down the team line and back again to the first player. If either team drops their matchbox, they have to start the thing again on the first player's nose.

TO complete this miniature Olympic meeting and the destruction of your clothes, here are four parlour-athletic numbers in the best before-bedtime tradition.

1. Stand with your toes behind some line on the carpet, take a matchbox in your right hand, pass your right hand under your right knee and put the matchbox as far in front of you as possible, without touching the floor with your hands.

2. Stand with your toes behind the line, put a matchbox on the right side of your right foot, then pick up the matchbox with your left hand by passing your arm in front of your right leg, round the leg, and over the foot. This may seem impossible, but is, when you get your balance right, perfectly easy.

3. Hold your right ear with your left hand and the left ankle (foot off the ground) with your right hand, and pick up a magazine or newspaper, balanced on end, with your teeth.

4. Two of you kneel down opposite each other, a yard or so apart, holding each a match in the right hand. The ubiquitous umpire stands between you to the side, holding a matchbox. Now you each hold your right ankle with your left hand, raise your right knee just clear of the floor, and, balancing so, one of you strikes his match on the umpire's matchbox and lights the other one's match.

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Carol—With Variations

On—and Off—with the Motley

By Eric Bennett

Illustrations by Tony Weare

He picked up the shabby finery and examined it with care and distaste. Then with a sigh he began to invest himself with the moth-eaten and inaccurately mediæval robes of Richard Whittington, late Lord Mayor of London.

He surveyed himself in the mirror and smiled thinly at the glory of red cotton and rabbit fur and tarnished gold. What a way for a man to earn a living!

Only the week before he had worn the scarlet of Santa Claus and had paraded his weary body in the toy department of a great shop. There he had had to bear the double burden of a false beard and an assumed benevolence: at least in his new rôle of Dick Whittington, walking advertisement for the Supreme Theatre pantomime, he would be saved that.

Yes, his pale, grey face with its tale of suffering and disease, and his thin, greying hair were more suitable for the sage Lord Mayor of London. He should never have attempted the harassing task of portraying a rubicund Santa Claus.

He laughed suddenly. There ought to be a casting bureau for these seasonal odd jobs. Pick out the right types for Santa Clauses, Dick Whittingtons, Robinson Crusoes, Aladdins, Clowns, Red Indians, Charlie Chaplins, and the rest of the strange parts that are allotted to the actors of the pavement and gutter.

The laugh twisted into a grimace at the pale face in the mirror. Not very funny. He remembered all those others he had seen, masquerading in white beards and red coats which failed to hide the raggedness of trouser-ends, remembered the bitterness in the eyes above their smiling faces, the weariness with which they removed their cotton-wool disguise at the end of the day.

He remembered the man who had gone home in his fur-topped Santa Claus boots—to keep his feet dry for one week in the year. And there were many who had come clamouring in vain for a job, clamouring for the privilege of wearing the red coat; they had gone away, with faces set and hard, to face the season of plenty and good cheer.

One more glance at his disguise in the mirror. The strained look on his face almost startled him. "Look the part to a T," he murmured, and set out for the pavement.

. . . Paraded his weary body in the toy department of a great shop

Dick Whittington was cold work. The stretch of pavement outside the Supreme Theatre was Icelandic in temperature and depression; a direct blast from the refrigerators of Heaven swept through the air above it. He wrapped the mayoral robes about him and cursed.

Santa Claus had been better than this; it had been in the warm, but this pantomime parade. . . . He smiled bitterly. He was miscast again. Ought to have got a job as Robinson Crusoe—he wears furs.

He laughed till he coughed, and the wind tore open the mayoral cloak and laughed too. Coughing, he wondered whether he ought to be out in that cold, whether it would mean another bout. . . . He knew that his heart could not stand much more strain.

Then he swore at himself for a coward. There were others in worse plight than he doing their jobs. There were others miming and strutting in the gutters for a few shillings that they were glad to get. They did not whine.

(Concluded on page i)

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Carol—With Variations

(Continued from page 82)

As if in illustration, a long line of sandwichmen turned the corner and meandered in their peculiar steady gait past his stretch of pavement. Their hands, he noticed, were blue with cold, and in their eyes was that same far-off, hopeless look that he had seen before. Yet the last of the line nodded and winked at him, and he grinned back, warmed somehow by the salute.

Later the wind dropped and Dick Whittington's audience increased. The small children gazed at him with wonder, until one more daring would shout a question or an insult, and then they scattered and ran.

Occasionally men and women would stop and stare, or point him out with a smile to their escorted children. Others would look at him with pity.

He became conscious of the stare of the little woman in the purple hat. "Seen her before somewhere," he murmured, and turned away to stamp the cold out of his feet.

The woman in the purple hat had evidently seen him before, too. She stood quite still on the pavement, even when the little knot of people around her had dissolved. She was looking at him with compassion.

She remembered him. His pale, consumptive face, his wispy hair, the gaunt lines of his ageing body were impressed upon her memory. She had seen him the week before as a ludicrous caricature of Father Christmas.

He had stood out in that week, pathetic in a crowd of pathetic men. She had wandered from shop to shop, store to store, watching the men who had ceased to be unemployed for a few days to act the Christmas fairy tale of Santa Claus and boundless bag.

As she had watched them heavily playing their parts, she had understood and pitied. But this gaunt Dick Whittington had excited her pity most of all. There was an appealing quality in the pallid refinement in his face; he seemed to be one of those men whom Fate plays mercilessly, twisting him with the refined torture of insecurity.

The woman in the purple hat opened her handbag quickly. She couldn't afford it, but . . .

He turned, stamping and swinging his arms, and in the next second she had run up to him and slipped the ten-shilling note into his hand beneath the wide sleeve of the mayoral robe.

"I know what it means—this—out of work," she stammered, and literally ran round the corner.

"But I——" he began. The purple hat had gone.

He took off the mayoral robe with its tarnished gilt and rabbit trimmings and hung it beside the mirror. He was coughing badly as he brushed his hair; the wind had done him no good.

He slipped on his overcoat and hat, paused at the door to feel in his pocket and smile—a strange smile—at the crackle of a ten-shilling note. Then he went down to the pavement, and called a taxicab.

Ten minutes later he strode into a warm office, nodded to a gloomy-looking young man in the corner, and sat down at a typewriter-desk.

"Extraordinary thing," he said to the young man, who was a reporter like himself. "You know I 'm doing this 'Odd Jobs With the Unemployed' series? I was dressed up as Dick Whittington today to advertise a pantomime and an old girl gave me ten bob! Because I was out of work. Fancy picking on me—the only odd-job man in the whole of London who isn't on his beam-ends!"

He laughed. But the young man didn't. In his eyes there was the same expression of pity as there had been on the face of the woman in the purple hat. He watched the other's pale, sick face as he opened a letter lying on the desk.

But he turned his head away while Dick Whittington read:

". . . owing to amalgamation, the paper will cease publication. We regret to have to give you a month's notice . . ."

THE END.

In the next second she had run up to him and slipped the ten shilling note into his hand

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Mrs. Stitch Fails for the First Time

(Continued from page 7)

"Not the chap I was thinking of," said the Managing Editor.

"Well, I've got to find him." He listlessly turned the pages of the morning paper. "Boot," he said. "Boot. Boot. Boot. Why!—*Boot*, here he is. Why didn't the chief say he was a staff man?"

At the back of the paper, ignominiously sandwiched between Pip and Pop, the Bedtime Pets, and the recipe for a dish named "Waffle Scramble," lay the bi-weekly half-column devoted to Nature: *LUSH PLACES, edited by William Boot, Countryman.*

"Do you suppose that's the right one?"

"Sure of it. The Prime Minister is nuts on rural England."

"He's supposed to have a particularly high-class style: '*Feather footed through the plashy fen passes the questing vole*' . . . would that be it?"

"Yes," said the Managing Editor. "That must be good style. At least it doesn't sound like anything else to me. I know the name well, now you mention it. Never seen the chap. I don't think he's ever been to London. Sends his stuff in by post. All written out in pen and ink."

"I've got to ask him to dinner."

"Give him cider."

"Is that what countrymen like?"

"Yes, cider and tinned salmon is the staple diet of the agricultural classes."

"I'll send him a telegram. Funny the chief wanting to send him to China."

III.

NEXT evening at seven o'clock an unfamiliar figure appeared in the Sassanian vestibule of *The Voice* office. It was not accurate to say that the Reverend William Boot had never been to London, but his visits had been rare enough for each of them to remain distinct and terrible in his memory. He was a cousin of the fashionable John Boot, but they had never met. For ten years now he had supplemented his meagre stipend with the twenty-five shillings a week paid for the half-column of *Lush Places*. He had secured the job by some nostalgic and eloquent essays written when he was a curate at Huddersfield. Since then he had removed to a distant West Country parish. Every Wednesday afternoon he cycled with his copy to the post office. He liked the work; it came easily to him; the wages were of the utmost importance in his budget; he liked to explain to neighbouring incumbents that he was "immersed in literary work" when they attempted to enlist his sympathies in diocesan controversies. Now, it seemed to him, his job was in danger. In his pocket he held a telegram that had arrived the day before: LORD COPPER REQUIRES YOUR PRESENCE LONDON IMMEDIATELY. All day in the train he had turned over and over the last *Lush Places*. Where had he gone wrong? Had Lord Copper some peculiar phobia with regard to water-voles? Had he been too censorious about otters? He stood in the bustle, a bewildered, burly, middle-aged man, fingering his black straw hat and blinking from one busy official to the next.

At last he approached the concierge, who seemed least occupied, and asked diffidently, "Could I please see his Lordship?"

"To which Lordship do you refer? We have four Earls and a Marquess on our staff."

"Lord Copper."

"Oh, I don't suppose you can see him. What is it about?"

"I think it must be about water-voles."

The concierge looked at him long and sceptically. "You'd better write," he said at length.

"But I have a telegram here from him asking me to come."

"Ho," said the man. . . .

Ten minutes later Mr. Boot was shown into the foreign editor's office.

"Lord Copper?" he asked.

"No," said Mr. Salter. "At least, not exactly. I represent Lord Copper. Sit down," he added, remembering his boss's injunction to be cordial. "Have a cigarette—or do you prefer your churchwarden?"

"I don't smoke."

The two men sat looking hopelessly at one another in silence.

"I suppose it's about water-voles," the clergyman at last ventured.

"Not at all," said Mr. Salter. Mr. Salter rose and paced the room as he had often seen Lord Copper pace in moments

(Concluded on page vi)

Evening Clothes

FOR MEN ABOUT REGENT STREET

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The Affair at Sedon Hall *(Continued from page 14)*

The third sitting began, according to plan, punctually at five o'clock. Sylvester went quickly into a trance and we sat in an intense, expectant silence. And then he stirred and said quietly: "It is coming—I think it is coming. But there is too much light; we must have complete darkness." The ruby light was switched off and again we sat and waited. Presently Sylvester gasped slightly and began a low, incoherent muttering. Suddenly over in a corner about a foot from the floor a faint radiance appeared, a little cloud of bright mist. A woman somewhere uttered a cry; a man stifled a cough; a series of raps reverberated round the room. The little cloud grew larger, slightly brighter, with an intense glowing core—a sort of nucleus which flickered and waned and waxed. Again Sylvester began his incoherent muttering and then, in a gasping, strained voice, cried: "Yes, yes! Oh, yes!" and then groaned and the light slowly faded. Again he stirred and then clapped his hands and the lights were switched on. His face was a-trickle with sweat, his black hair dishevelled, his dark eyes burning. "It is all right," he said, "have courage. But more power is needed—much more. We must have help—more people." He looked at Sir Henry, who went over to him and, after a low-voiced, brief talk, left the room and returned in about five minutes with the whole of the staff, five women and three men. They all looked rather sheepish, the women scared, the men deferentially unwilling. The circle was widened to include them, the lights extinguished, and once more, after Sylvester had gone into a trance, we sat and waited in the utter darkness, which even I found trying to the nerves because of the emotionally-charged atmosphere. And then abruptly, without a sound or movement from the medium, the light appeared again in the corner and one of the maids screamed hysterically. The light waxed and waned with its brilliant core. It began to take on some semblance of form, of shape, a sort of diffused human shape. A boy's voice cried "Father!", and the light began to fade. I heard a low sobbing near me—a man's harsh sobbing. And then again the light began to wax. But this time, ere reaching any brilliancy or any shape, it faded, but before it disappeared there was, very faintly and whisperingly, a low cry of "Father!" A full further hour we sat waiting, while ever and again the light came and went and Sylvester muttered and gasped and stirred with abrupt, jerking movements of his legs. Finally, there was a loud booming, inarticulate cry which echoed about the room, and then the medium called out in a strained, choking voice: "No more! No more!" and clapped his hands. The lights revealed him as a dishevelled, sweating, panting figure: but it revealed more distressing things—white-faced, frightened women, scared menservants, and the pitiful picture of Sir Henry's drawn, distorted, tear-stained face.

But these were not the only revelations of that evening. When the guests went up to their rooms to dress for dinner they found them ransacked to the tune, as was subsequently proved, of something like twenty-five thousand pounds—mostly in gems and trinkets, but also a fair quantity of notes and cash. I lost the least, for I had the least to lose.

The sequel? Well, I don't know. There certainly was one, although Sir Henry refused to accept it as one and would not move in the matter. He doubtless had his reasons, and they were good to him. As for myself, the sequel merely convinced me of the truth of what I already suspected. It was certainly an odd coincidence. About three months later (it was the following Easter) I was dining with a friend at Larue's in Paris. We had a table for two in a little alcove. I thought I recognised a hidden man's voice, and peering round a fern saw Sylvester dining exceedingly well and smiling into the eyes of Miss Rachel Benson.

WHEN I returned to England I arranged a meeting with Sir Henry in town and took him round to my flat, and there, with the help of a young electrician, I produced, first with the lights full on and afterwards in darkness, all the phenomena we had witnessed at Sedon Hall. And then, to crown it, I related what I had seen in Larue's restaurant. But it was all a waste of breath and really first-class conjuring. He waved it all aside with a thin, shaking hand, and his expression showed how bitterly he was offended. He took his leave curtly, pathetically.

His name, of course, was not Sir Henry Sedon. If I told you his true name and title you would recall at once the circumstances of his tragic suicide.

THE END.

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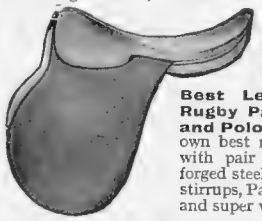

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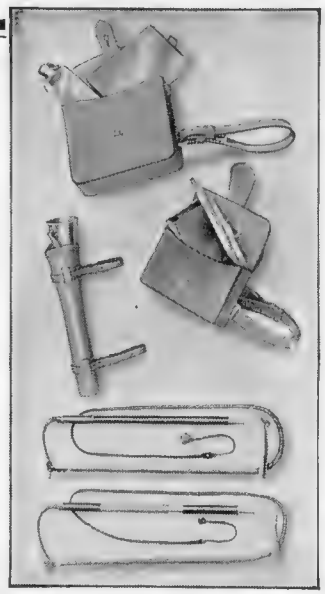

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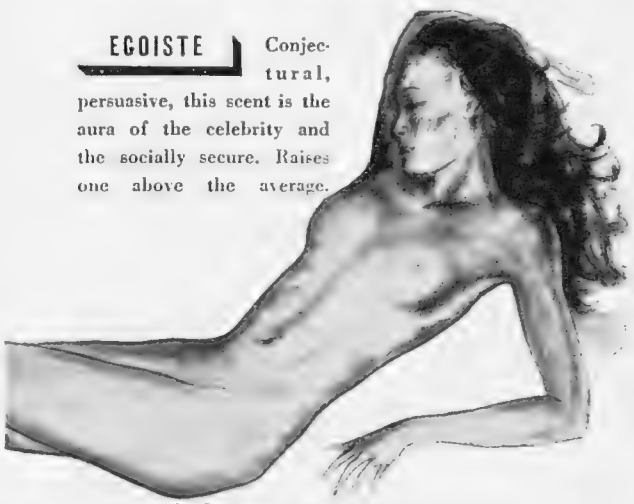

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MADE IN THE COUNTRY AT THE ORCHARD FACTORY, HISTON, CAMBRIDGE

Mrs. Stitch Fails for the First Time *(Continued from page ii)*

of uncertainty. "Mr. Boot," he said. "We 're sending you to China."

"I beg your pardon."

"We want you to go to China."

"Well, that 's very kind of you, I 'm sure. I often wanted to go. As soon as the fighting 's over I should like to accept your offer very much."

"We want you to go to-night."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, you know. . . . I 've got a return ticket home. . . . Besides, it might be dangerous."

"We would insure your life—*handsomely*."

"And you 'd go on paying me my twenty-five shillings a week ? "

"Certainly."

"*And* my fare there and back, *and* my expenses ? "

"Yes."

Mr. Boot thought the matter over carefully. At length he said : "No."

"No ? "

"No. It 's very kind of you, but I think I would sooner not go. I don't like the idea at all." He looked at his watch. "I must be going to Paddington soon to catch my train."

"Listen," said Mr. Salter. "I don't think you have fully understood the situation. Lord Copper is particularly interested in your work and, to be frank, he insists on your going. We are willing to pay a very fair salary. Fifty pounds a month was the sum suggested."

"Fifty pounds a month ! " said Mr. Boot, goggling.

"A week," said Mr. Salter hastily.

"Gosh ! " said Mr. Boot.

"And think what you can make on your expenses," urged Mr. Salter. "At least another fifty. I happened to see Hitchcock's expense sheet when he was working for us in Madrid. He charged three hundred pounds for bullock-transport alone."

"Perhaps bullock-transport is very expensive in Madrid. Anyway, I don't want it."

Mr. Salter saw that he was not making his point clear. "Take a single example," he said. "Supposing you want to have dinner. Well you go to a restaurant and do yourself proud, best of everything. Bill perhaps may be two pounds. Well, you put down five pounds for entertainment and your expenses. You 've had a slap-up dinner, you 're three pounds to the good, and everyone is satisfied."

"But you see, I don't like restaurants and I am not at all certain that what you suggest would be honest."

"We might offer a larger salary."

"Oh, no, thank you. It isn't that. It 's just that I don't want to go."

"Is there *nothing* you want ? "

"D'you know, I don't believe there is. Except to keep my job in *Lush Places* and go on living at home."

It was a familiar cry ; during his fifteen years of service with the Megalopolitan Company Mr. Salter had heard it upon the lips of countless distressed colleagues ; upon his own. In a moment of compassion he remembered the morning when he had been called from his desk in *Clean Fun*, never to return to it. The post had been his delight and pride ; one for which he believed he had a particular aptitude. . . . First he would open the morning mail and sort the jokes sent him by the private contributors (one man sent him thirty or forty a week) into those that were familiar, those that were indecent, and those that deserved the half-crown postal order payable upon publication. Then he would spend an hour or two with the bound *Punches* noting whatever seemed topical. Then the ingenious game began of fitting these legends to the funny illustrations previously chosen for him by the Art Editor. Serene and delicate sunrise on a day of tempest. From this task of ordered discrimination he had been thrown into the ruthless, cut-throat rough and tumble of *The Voice* Woman's Page. From there, crushed and bedraggled, he had been tossed into the editor's chair of the Imperial and Foreign News. . . . His heart bled for Mr Boot, but he was true to the austere traditions of his service. He made the reply that had silenced so many resentful novices in the past.

"Oh, but Lord Copper expects his staff to work wherever the best interests of the paper call them. I don't think he would employ anyone of whose loyalty he was doubtful, in any capacity."

"You mean that I must either lose my job or go to China ? "

"That," said Mr. Salter gravely, "is the Copper Tradition. . . . Shall we go out to dinner ? I expect you feel like a nice drop of cider."

IV.

VERY shortly afterwards a startled clergyman was hurtling through the darkness in a special aeroplane.

At the same moment Mr. John Courtenay Boot was standing in his little bedroom removing his white tie and rehearsing the emotional and final leave-taking which he hoped to make.

Mr. Salter was sleeping peacefully in Gwdyr Park in the happy knowledge that he had done his duty.

And Mrs. Stitch, who had heard that a baboon had escaped from the Zoo, was driving round Regent's Park with a spot-light and a camera, accompanied by a bewildered Viennese scientist.

THE END.

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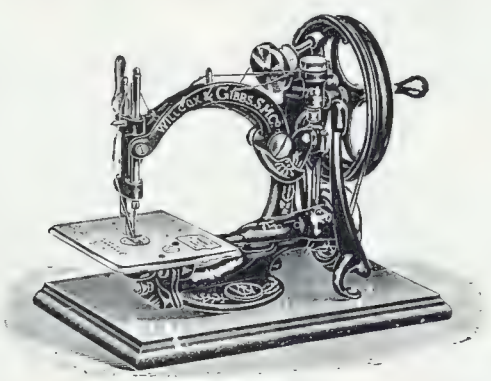

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HOW DOES ONE GET THERE ?

By Plane—New York to Miami 8 hours, Miami to Nassau by Pan American Clipper 2 hours.
By Train—New York to Miami 30 hours, and then by Plane 2 hours, or overnight by ship.
By Ship—from New York to Nassau 2½ days.
By Pacific Navigation Co. via Azores, 12 days.
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WHAT IS THE CLIMATE LIKE ?

Finest winter climate in the world. The temperature ranges between 80° F. and 90° F. from May to November and between 68° F. and 79° F. from December to May. Nassau has been recognized as a health resort for over 200 years.

WHAT DOES ONE DO THERE ?

Life moves at an even pace in Nassau, but one can be gay or quiet at will. There are glittering night clubs and quiet spacious hotels. Fashionable bathing beaches and sleepy palm-fringed coves. There are opportunities for every type of sport and amusement.

WHAT IS THE SCENERY LIKE ?

Charming old streets and green lawns. Palms, white beaches and an azure sea. Red hibiscus trees, oleanders, cassias and calabash and orchid trees. The old water front. Stately Colonial houses. Modern shops. Native fishing boats and handsome yachts Fairy-coloured underwater coral gardens.

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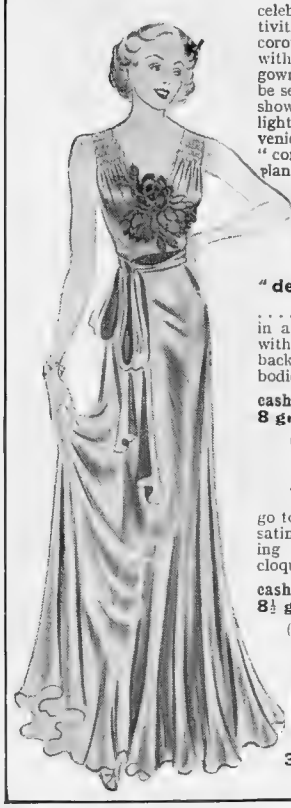

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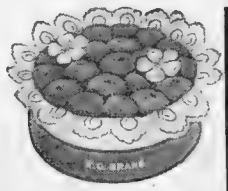

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Betty will have her first happy Christmas this year—in the care of the Waifs and Strays Society. During 1937, more than a thousand needy children have been received by the Society, and many of them have never known a happy home before.

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The Royal Northern Hospital

This hospital is carrying out a vital work in the Northern part of London, where it is looked on by a million poor people as their panacea. But it is in dire need of money.

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Sixty-five thousand pounds will pay off the Maintenance Department; £10,000 provide a new Bacteriological Department; £5000 will name a ward; £2200 re-equip the Operating Theatre; they can endow a bed for £750, and for lesser sums they can pay yearly egg and coal bills, provide nurses' accommodation and treat out-patients. No sum is too large or too small for the needs it must meet and go on meeting as long as human beings continue to suffer from mental and bodily ills.

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But this training costs money—so the number of cripples admitted is strictly limited by the funds available. There are many deserving cases on the "Waiting List." Must we turn a deaf ear to their urgent appeals for admission? ***The work is entirely dependent upon voluntary contributions and occasional legacies received.***

Her Majesty the Queen, when Duchess of York, visited the Crippleage and expressed great satisfaction at the happy conditions under which the crippled girls work.

In addition to the 300 Crippled Girls at Edgware and Clerkenwell, 200 orphan girls are cared for in Orphan Homes at Clacton-on-Sea. Rest and Seaside Homes for Cripples are also maintained at Clacton.

What the Press says (one of many tributes):

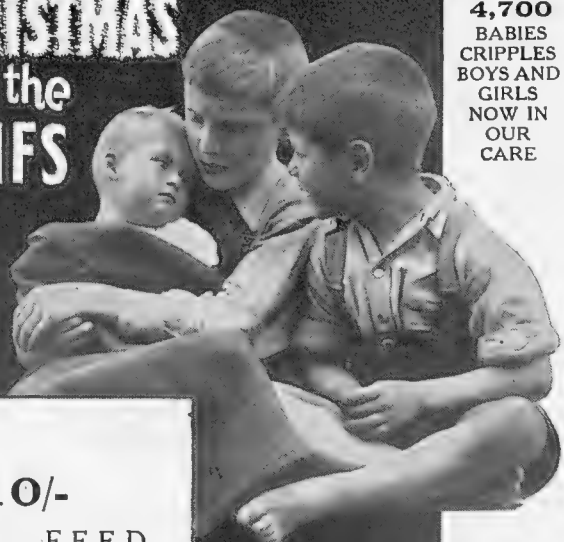
"To see girls so cruelly handicapped physically showing the pluck and perseverance and patience which must go into the work they do, makes one thankful for men such as the late John A. Groom."

Make YOUR Christmas happier by making these cripples happy. Please send your contribution now. Postcard addressed to the Secretary will bring interesting literature.

JOHN GROOM'S CRIPPLEAGE AND FLOWER-GIRLS' MISSION (Inc.)

37, SEKFORDE STREET, CLERKENWELL, LONDON, E.C.1.

CHRISTMAS and the WAIFS



4,700 BABIES CRIPPLES BOYS AND GIRLS NOW IN OUR CARE

10/-

WILL FEED TWO CHILDREN FOR A WEEK AT CHRISTMAS

WILL YOU BE THEIR SANTA CLAUS?

41,000 CHILDREN ALREADY PROVIDED FOR

The Smallest GIFT Gratefully received by The Secretary

WAIFS & STRAYS

KENNINGTON SOCIETY LONDON S.E.11.

WILL you help to maintain and train our **1,100** poor boys and girls?

DONATIONS AND LEGACIES URGENTLY NEEDED

THE SHAFTESBURY HOMES & "ARETHUSA" TRAINING SHIP

164, SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, LONDON, W.C.2

President: H.R.H. THE DUKE OF KENT, K.G.

Printers' Pension, Almshouse & Orphan Asylum Corporation

Offices: HANOVER HOUSE, 73-78, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1

Telephone: **Chancery 8548 (2 lines).** **Robert H. Lucas,** *Secretary.*

This great and useful Institution is now in pressing need of funds, in order that its assistance may be spread over as large a number of beneficiaries as possible. The extent of its usefulness may be gathered from the fact that it distributes no less than £48,000 a year amongst over 2,000 recipients, aged printers and widows, orphan children and almshouse residents. At the forthcoming election over 500 necessitous candidates, both men and women, are seeking its help, all of them deserving because during their working life they subscribed to the funds, a principle of thrift which should commend the work to the generous consideration of everyone who believes in helping those who help themselves. No eligible Orphan of a subscribing Printer has ever been refused assistance.

500 Guineas creates a pension which can be named after the donor, a most suitable method of perpetuating a name or a memory.

Contributions gratefully received and further information gladly given by the Secretary.

John Groom's Crippleage

To quote from last year's report of this organisation: This year we regret to have to report that the slight increase in general subscriptions has not been maintained. On the contrary, there has been a disquieting falling off. Moreover, our income from legacies has likewise declined. Our reduced income from these important sources is causing us continued anxiety, lest, for want of adequate funds, we should be compelled to curtail any of our activities. Slight increases are reported from our fêtes and sundry collections, also from the crippled girls' board, the latter being due, of course, to the greater number of girls under our care. The effect of this has also been felt on the other side of the balance sheet, every other item of expenditure having been increased, with the exception, already referred to, of the cost of the Industrial Training Branch.

This report of a charity widely known for training of crippled girls, which also runs a subsidiary orphanage, a holiday home at Clacton and a Flower Women's Association, should speak for itself in making an appeal to the public of this wealthy kingdom.

The Alexandra Orphanage

H.R.H. the Duke of Kent is President of the Alexandra Orphanage which cares for 380 fatherless or motherless boys and girls at the School at Maitland Park, London, N.W., and several scholars there owe their reception to his kindly interest.

Children who show ability are given opportunities for Secondary Education or Technical Training, and many former scholars have attained influential positions, helping the School to assist the new generation which seeks its help.

Each year £10,000 must be raised by voluntary donations, and contributions will be welcomed by the Honorary Treasurer, Mr. James V. Rank, at the offices of the Alexandra Orphanage, 34-40, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4.

Dr. Barnardo's Homes

PERHAPS the most famous of English charities, Dr. Barnardo's Homes, with the biggest family in the world, deserve a special thought at Christmas, the family festival.

Few can remain untouched by the light in a child's eyes as, on Christmas morning, it opens the surprise packets; it is hard, also, to resist the eager rush to the door when the postman showers the greeting cards on the mat.

Dr. Barnardo's Homes are hoping that the postman will be a frequent caller at their door, for although the famous door in Stepney is ever-open to destitute childhood, the postman *has* to knock at it. Will you ensure that he knocks to good purpose?

Cancer—the Secret Menace

THE disease of cancer kills one person in seven over the age of thirty-five. Its insidious nature and its apparent lack of preference for any type of individual makes it a menace to every living human being. Very few of us have not one person in the family who has suffered from its attack.

There are several organisations working against this enemy and they deserve as much support as any armament campaign against other possible enemies. You have already been urged to support these organisations in the BYSTANDER Coronation Number. To repeat the details given then is the best way of impressing the need:—

IMPERIAL CANCER RESEARCH FUND

Patron—**HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE KING.**
President—**THE RT. HON. VISCOUNT HALIFAX, K.G., P.C.**
Chairman of the Executive Committee—**SIR HUMPHRY ROLLESTON, BT., G.C.V.O., K.C.B.**
Hon. Treasurer—**SIR HOLBURT WARING, BT., C.B.E., F.R.C.S.**

Founded in 1902, under the direction of the Royal College of Physicians of London and the Royal College of Surgeons of England as a centre for research and information on cancer, The Imperial Cancer Research Fund is working unceasingly on the systematic investigation of the disease in man and animals The work of this Fund and of other great centres of research has increased our knowlege of the origin and nature of cancer and has so altered our outlook that the disease is now curable in increasing numbers. But our present accommodation is too limited and **we are now building new modern laboratories** to extend the scope of our investigations. The income from investments and the Endowment Fund is insufficient to cover the total annual expenditure, and help is urgently needed to meet the heavy additional cost of expansion.

Donations, Subscriptions and Legacies are earnestly solicited and should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, 8/11, Queen Square, London, W.C.1.

FORM OF BEQUEST

I hereby bequeath the sum of £ to the Treasurer of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund under the direction of the Royal College of Physicians of London and the Royal College of Surgeons of England, 8-11, Queen Square, Bloomsbury, London, W.C.1, for the purpose of Scientific Research, and I direct that his receipt shall be a good discharge for such legacy.

The Royal Cancer Hospital

At the present moment the committee of the Royal Cancer Hospital (Free), Fulham Road, is faced with the urgent necessity of extending the Research Institute, modernising the wards, some of which date back to 1851, when the hospital was founded, and privding more accommodation for nurses. These extensions will cost £150,000. It is difficult to see where the money is coming from particularly as the present income is insufficient to pay for the free treatment of patients.

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The British Empire Cancer Campaign

The British Empire Cancer Campaign through its Research centres is conducting an energetic attack upon the disease, not only is it trying to discover the cause, but it has been extremely successful through research in improving methods of treatment. It can be truly said that the sun never sets upon the battle against Cancer, for in the Campaign's branches throughout the Homeland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa the struggle for conquest is being carried on unceasingly, unwearied, indomitable. All contributions will be gratefully received by the Hon. Treasurer, at 12, Grosvenor Crescent, Hyde Park Corner, S.W.1.

Part of Another Large Family—The Alexandra Orphanage

THIS HAPPINESS

is evidence of the affection and care bestowed upon the girls and boys at the Alexandra Orphanage at Maitland Park, London. This little girl was admitted 3 years ago at the age of four. She will remain until she is 15 at least. There are 380 now in residence. Many are receiving secondary education or technical training. Will you help these fatherless or motherless children by sending a donation? We need £10,000 each year above our assured income.

ALEXANDRA ORPHANAGE

FOUNDED 1758

Patrons:
H.M. THE KING. H.M. QUEEN MARY

President:
H.R.H. THE DUKE OF KENT, K.G.

Hon. Treasurer: JAMES V. RANK, ESQ.

Offices: 34-40 Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

Please remember US . . .

"We're looking forward to a happy Christmas in Dr. Barnardo's Homes."

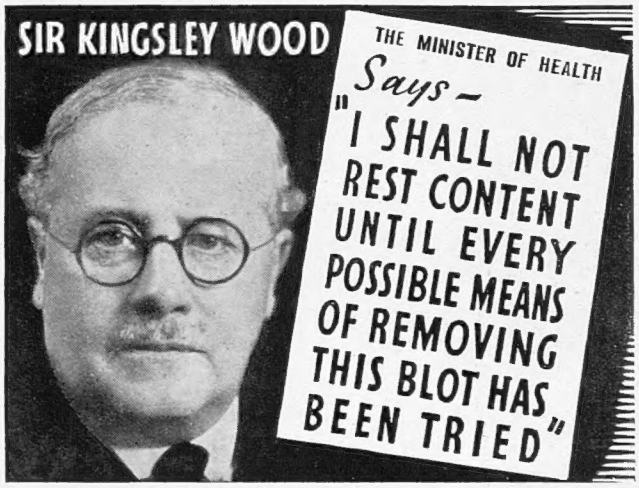
Many of the 8,200 girls and boys now in the care of the Homes will be spending their first really happy Christmas. Without children Christmas would be a very dull affair indeed but with 8,200 youngsters to cater for the Festive Season is always an anxious time for Barnardo's. Please lend a hand!

DR. BARNARDO'S HOMES

10/- would be very acceptable.

Will you make at least one little child happy this Christmas?

Cheques etc. (crossed) payable Dr. Barnardo's Homes should be sent to 74 Barnardo House, Stepney Causeway, London, E.1.



"Every possible means" demands sufficient funds to provide the most up-to-date methods of treatment and to enable research work to be carried on unceasingly. Then, and only then, can we of The Royal Cancer Hospital (Free) hope to fight a ***winning*** battle against cancer, which takes toll of 60,000 lives every year. . . . this scourge which may at any moment strike at you or yours.

£150,000 is urgently needed. Will you please help by sending a special Christmas Gift to The Treasurer.

The Royal Cancer Hospital

(FREE)

FULHAM ROAD - LONDON, S.W.3

To make-and keep you fit~

~Science *plus* Nature's *finest* foods~

SCIENCE was never more justified than in the long and patient researches which produced 'Ovaltine.' This perfect tonic food has for many years wielded an unrivalled influence for health throughout the world, and is the food beverage most widely recommended by doctors everywhere.

Prepared from the choicest and best of Nature's protective foods, 'Ovaltine' provides, in unequalled abundance, the vitamins and every other nutritive element needed to build up perfect fitness of body, brain and nerves.

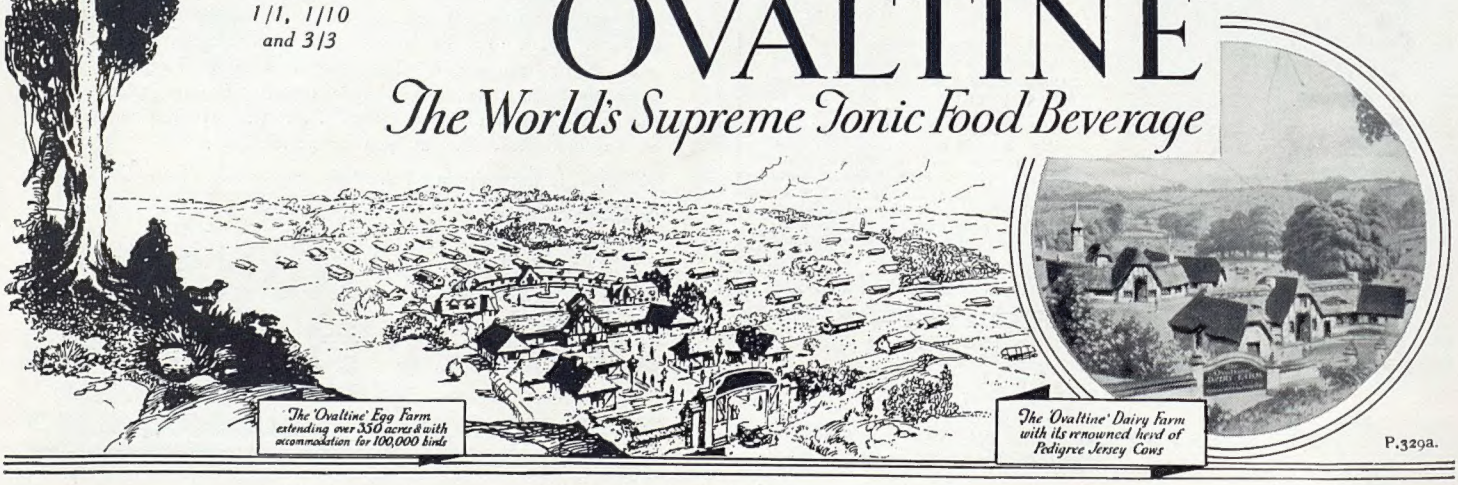
The proprietors of 'Ovaltine' go to unusual lengths to maintain the exceptionally high quality of 'Ovaltine.' The 'Ovaltine' Factory, Dairy Farm and Egg Farm are world-famous because of the most modern scientific and hygienic methods employed.

'Ovaltine' provides every single feature required by advanced scientific thought to-day, and is the most economical food beverage you can buy. Reject substitutes.

Prices in Gt. Britain and N. Ireland, 1/1, 1/10 and 3/3

'OVALTINE'

The World's Supreme Tonic Food Beverage



The 'Ovaltine' Egg Farm extending over 350 acres & with accommodation for 100,000 birds

The 'Ovaltine' Dairy Farm with its renowned herd of Pedigree Jersey Cows

P.329a.

GIVE HIM A SHIRT

after all *every* man wears a shirt . . . *but which shirt?*

Why 'Vantella,' of course—because they're cut from fadeless, unshrinkable cloth in three lengths of sleeve to every neckband size (nice for little men with long arms and tall men with short arms), and they're made with 'Van Heusen' curve woven semi-stiff cuffs and unshrinkable neckbands. Besides, the collars to match are 'Van Heusen' semi-stiff, boneless and buttonless—what a blessing!—and always replaceable. Yes, 'Vantella'—'Van Heusen' wearers laugh at laundries! 'Vantella' shirts in zephyr cost 9/3, in poplin de luxe 10/6. 'Van Heusen' collars are 1/3 each extra. All from any good outfitter.

Shirts by
'VANTELLA'
Collars to match by
'VAN HEUSEN'

'Van Heusen' semi-stiff neckbands, collars and cuffs are made exclusively by Harding, Tilton & Hartley Ltd., London.

For the well-dressed man :

'VANTELLA' SHIRTS · 'VAN HEUSEN' COLLARS · BROCKLEHURST TIES

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A Memorable Year

And now for Christmas and "BLACK & WHITE"

SCOTCH WHISKY